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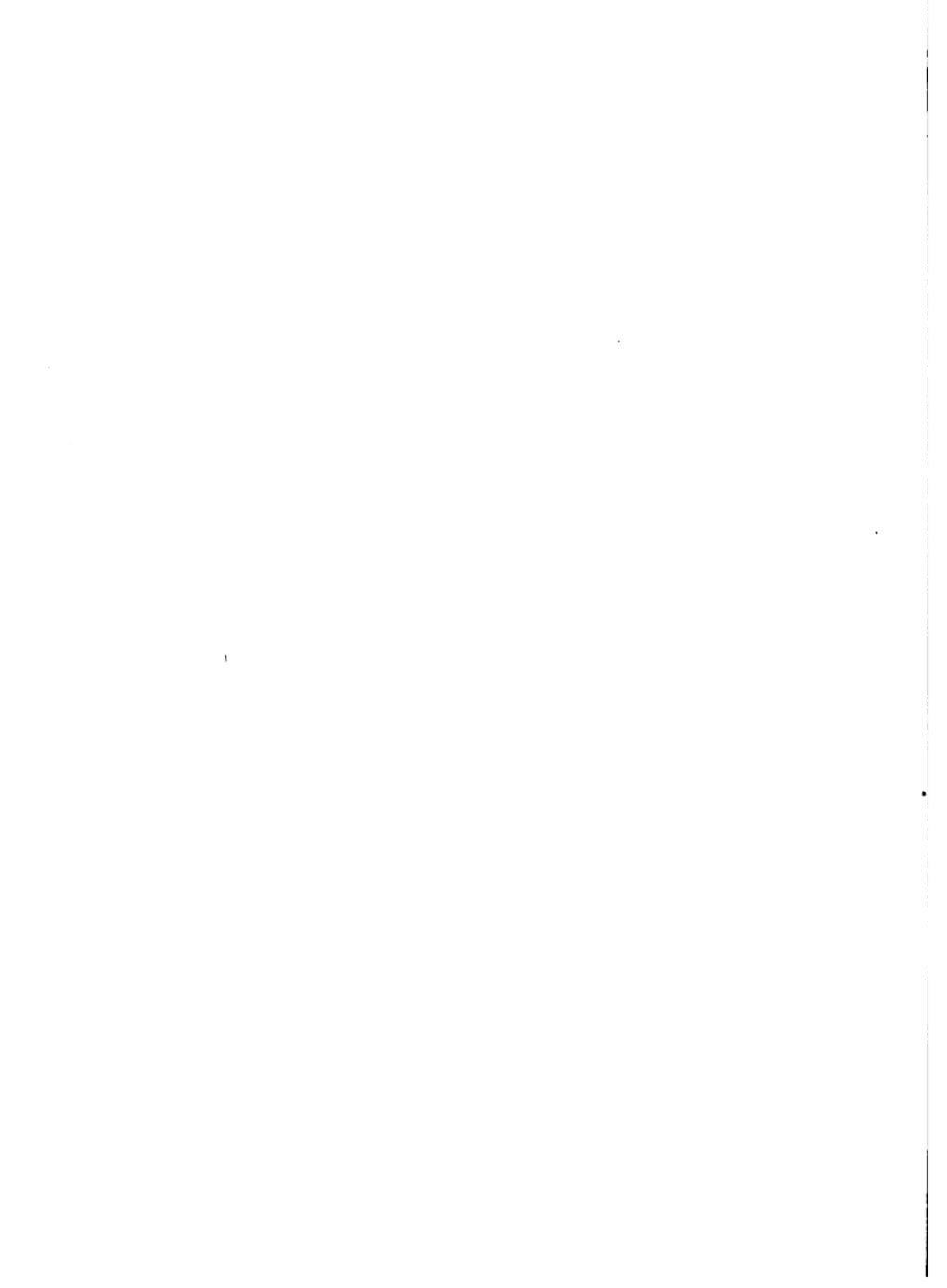
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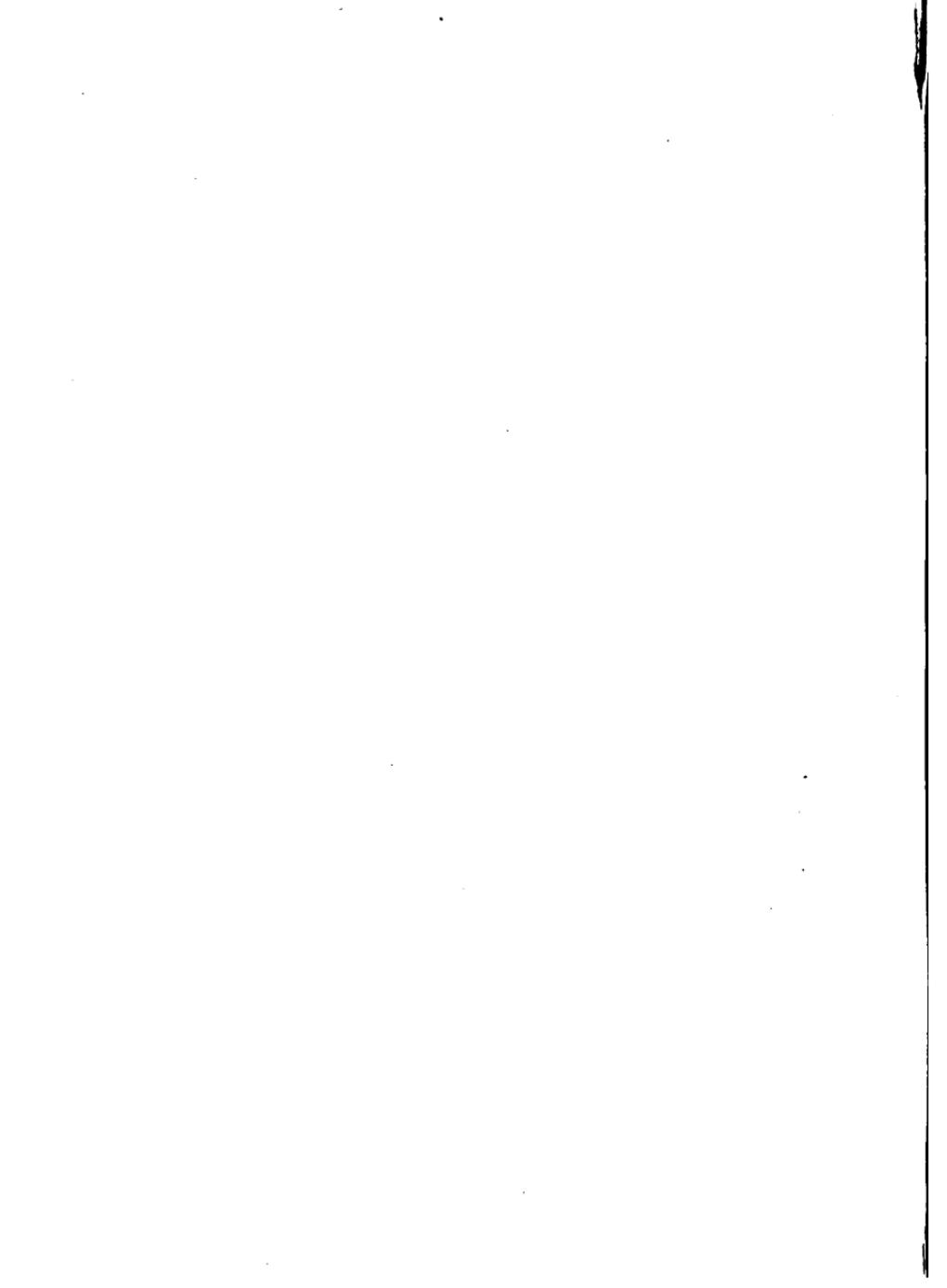
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THE GIFT OF

MRS. THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON
AND
MARGARET HIGGINSON BARNEY





IN MY LADY'S PRAISE.



IN MY LADY'S PRAISE

BEING

Poems, Old and New

WRITTEN TO THE HONOUR OF

FANNY, LADY ARNOLD

AND NOW COLLECTED FOR HER MEMORY

BY

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD, M.A., K.C.I.E., C.S.I.

AUTHOR OF "THE LIGHT OF ASIA," ETC. ETC.

LONDON
TRÜBNER & CO., LUDGATE HILL

1889

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Ballantyne Press
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EDINBURGH AND LONDON

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“Good Night! not Good-bye!”

(*Her last words, March 15, 1889.*)

*I saw my Lady die;
And He, who oftentimes cruel is, dark Death,
Was so deep-sorrowful to stay her breath,
He came, all clemency :*

*He would not let her know;
So well he loved the bright soul he must take
That, for our grieving, and her own fair sake,
He hid his shaft and bow :*

*Upon her lips he laid
That “kiss of God” which kills, but does not harm;
With tender message, breathing no alarm,
He said “Be unafraid !”*

*Sorrow grew almost glad,
Pain half-forgiven, parting well-nigh kind,
To mark how placidly my Lady’s mind
Consented.—Ready-clad*

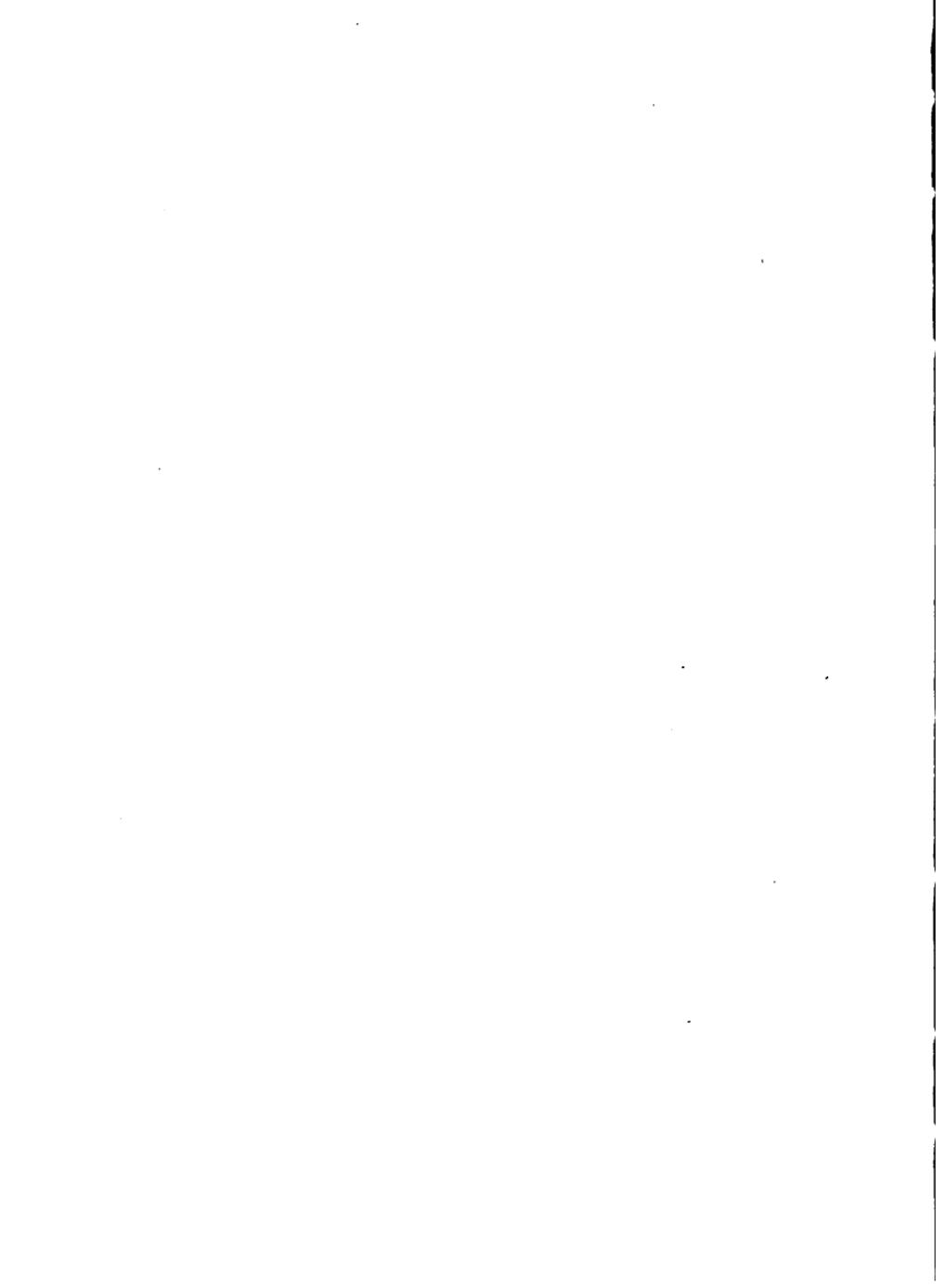
*In robes of unseen light
Her willing soul spread wing ; and, while she passed,
“ Darling ! good-bye ! ” we moaned—but She, at last,
Murmured “ No !—but Good-Night ! ”*

*Good-night ! then !—Sweetheart ! Wife—
If this world be the dark time, and its morrow
Day-dawn of Paradise, dispelling sorrow,
Lighting our starless Life.*

*Good-night !—and not Good-bye !
Good-night !—and best “ Good-morrow ! ” if we wake ;
Yet, why so quickly tired ? Well, we must make
Haste to be done, and die !*

*For dying has grown dear
Now you are dead, who turned all things to grace ;
We see Death made pale slumber on your face ;
Good-night !—But is Dawn near ?—*

*Flowers rich of scent and hue
We laid upon your sleeping-place. And these,
Flowers of fond verse, which once had gift to please—
Being your own—take, too !*



INTRODUCTION.

'TWAS I who sang how Sultan Shah Jahan
Built the white House of Death for Arjamand
On Jumna's shore ; how,* " all for lordly love,
The marbles were Mukrâni—Jeypore's best—
Brought seventy koss in creaking cattle-wains ;
The sandstone Futtéhpur's ; how the gems came
Over a hundred wastes, a thousand hills,
By camel-caravan, ten thousand bales,
From Balkh, Iran, and far-off Khorasan :
What crores the Emperor lavished on his Taj ;
What lakhs of workmen toiled for what long years
Accomplishing the Death-Place of his Queen :
All for her love ! Dying at Burhanpur,
She spake to him : ' Oh, Sultan of the Age !
Life of my soul ! who lov'dst me so, and knowest
How well I loved ! now pass I, leaving thee
Last child and latest kiss. Let all the world
Know thy large love and mine, and build for me
For Mumtaz dead, thy Persian wife, a Tomb

* From "With Sâdi, in the Garden."

Which earth shall marvel at, and all men laud,
Extolling thee and not forgetting me.'
And Jahan cried: 'Yea! but, by God the Truth!
This thing shall be; the world shall know of thee;
Thou shalt have such a tomb!' Whereon she died,
And Shah Jahan builded the Taj Mahal."

So did I sing the Sultan's lordliness.

But you—my Arjamand, my bright One, lost!
My New-World Wife! my Lady of the West,
Who, from so far-off, came to be so near—
No snow-white marble blocks have I to pile,
No throng of wise artificers to toil,
No kingdom's treasures at thy grave to pour
As gold were safflower, as if silver were
Jungle-blooms stripped, and jewels fountain-drops.
Only these jewels * have I, which were cut
White from the mind, and blood-red from the heart;
Only my verses have I, which I built
Line by line, for thee living, and now roof
With sorrowful last words, and coping-stones
Of fond farewell. Yet sleep not thou o'er-humbled!
It may be these shall last when those are crumbled.

* "The Casket of Gems."

THE CASKET OF GEMS.

[PARTLY WRITTEN IN 1870.]

*"—But your name men shall know,
Reading these jewelled letters which compose
Its gentle music ; for my verse will go—*

*Glad with the light of Love and you—to days
When better poets live, and Life, made strong
By sheaves of our sad sowing-time, shall praise
Ladies we sang, and graces of our song."*

—Vid. page 118.

THE CASKET OF GEMS.

DEIGN, Sweetheart ! deign to take what true
love sends,
Its daily gift set fair in gentle song ;
Where—if verse fail—heart's faith would make
amends,
So earnest, speech, at best, must do it wrong.

All lonely as I sit, a fancy raised
Lightens the heavy hour's dull incompleteness :—
“ Why is she sweet and good save to be praised,
Or I a singer save to praise her sweetness ? ”

Some whisper from the Silence ! Who can say ?
Poets, before, have found new music so !
At least, hereby, what I thought, day by day,
Your eyes will read, and tender breast will know.

And all spheres, Dear ! are servants unto Love ;
And all things in the world obey a Poet ;
And once—they say—the letter Yod did move,
And cried aloud to Heav'n—Mishna doth show it !

Therefore I bid these Letters—each of them—
Be messengers of splendour to you now ;
Each minion casting at your feet some gem
Worthy your white neck, or your arm, or brow.

If one should falter—if one fail herein—
Denounce the traitor ! It shall surely bring
Ill to that slave, as when an Arab Djin
Vexed Suleiman, or mocked Aladdin's ring !

F

FIRE-OPALS, Fanny, from the magic cell !

First of my alchemy, but not its best—
Let me lay these upon your hands, and tell
Why they seem not unworthy there to rest.

For since God chained, in nether rock and bluff,
Those radiant, sinful Angels, rebel found,
Were ever—in the midst of dead dull stuff—
Such burning, flashing beams of glory bound ?

I think a broken rainbow would look so,
If we could come at it, and steal a tittle
When the Arch-Architects of air forego
Their work, and leave it drifting loose a little.

I pray you gaze a while on these lit stones
By fancy fetched from Australasian steeps,
Where moony pearl sets blazing scarlet tones,
And pale gold melts to green, and amber leaps

To bloomy violets ; and celestial blues
Flicker to rose and ruby. You shall turn
Nowise these jewels, but their shifting hues
To some new brilliancy will swiftly burn.

So shall true lady bend no faithful love
Toward some new need, but from its patient heart
Rays of an unexpected light will move,
And richer colours from its spirit start.

Mark, also, when the "noble opal" feels
Your palm's warm glow, its dancing beauties brighten :
Breathe on this Hydrophane—the rose-tint steals
From point to point ; and sea-green flashes lighten

The sleeping flint ! Or, lay this Hyalite
One instant 'mid the laces of your dress,
Then note its sudden splendours ! So, 'tis right
Love's colours be drawn forth by tenderness.

Yet, here is why I prize the shifting gem,
And why I lay it on that dear right hand,
Of all earth's common things the core of them
Is humblest : Sweetheart ! pray you understand !

Mean rubbish of the road-heaps ; silicates
Which gather in chalk-hollows, where, sea-bred,
Millions of billions, tubes and tunicates
Laid down their limy shells, Nature's small dead.

Who would have thought there should be use, or other
Service, for such lost Atoms of the main
When, sinking through the seas, they give the Mother
Their tiny life-garbs, to lay up again ?

But She,—who hastes not, wastes not, scorns not—takes it,
Each relic of her nameless children gone,
Stores her sea-oozes with their spoil, and makes it
Chalk down, or marble vein, or quarry-stone.

Till ages thence—of ruined nummulites,
Pharaohs their pyramids majestic build ;
And Pheidias, from a tomb of trilobites,
Calls Pallas forth, radiant with helm and shield !

So this fair wonder ; 'tis the draft of rock
Melted in fires of under-world, or broken
From snow-swept crag, or shorn in earthquake-shock ;
Of storm, and stress, and wreck the splintered token.

And yet, because Day's white rays evermore
Find their way back into such flinty things,
They glow like Seraphs' feathers. None is poor!
None mean! Heaven's light can make them mates
for kings!

A.

HEREWITH, an Amethystine Cup ! see, Dear !
How soft and pure the liquid purple swims !
'Tis the Maid's stone : she hath no fault or fear
Whose untouched lips drink from such chalice-brims ;

Whose virginal cold fingers clasp this stem
To quaff the sober wavelet of the streams ;
And, if she wear an Amethyst, the gem
Keeps her sleep calm, and innocent her dreams.

It should be coloured as though violet satin
Changed to translucent crystal—with clear glow
Of rose-red 'gainst the Sun :—the learnéd Latin
“ Eyelid of Venus ” styles it, tinted so.

Or you may wear Avanturine with spangles
Of golden brown ; or Chrysoprase which gleams
Pale apple-green ; or Rose-quartz that entangles
Blushes of dawn, with white and lilac beams :

Or Sard, the Carver's gem ; or Bloodstone sombre
Spotted from veins of Christ—the legend says—
Or Prase ; or Plasma, sea-grey stained with umber ;
Or Chalcedony, quenching silver rays

In milk. These all be sister-miracles
Of Amethyst ; treasures of gnomes, brought up
From distant caverns where the chill snake dwells
'Mid poisonous flow'rs. Yet, most regard my cup

Far-fetched and wonderful ! If you would know
Whence came so fair a work of mortal hands,
Learn it lay buried many fathoms low
Under a temple-tank in Indian lands.

Œlian—"the honey-tongued"—its story writes
In pleasant Greek ; one, named Heraclia,—
A great Dame—in her Garden of Delights
Saw a young stork fall on the public way :

Some cruel arrow-barb had hurt its wing
Spread for long flight to Coromandel's shore ;
Piteous, in dust and blood, the affrighted thing
Lay :—but she sped, and gathered it, and bore—

Soft-folded on her breast—into her bower ;
And there, with soothing balms and unguents strange,
Healed his harsh wound, and gave him back the power
Of those broad painted pinions, to outrange

The flying cruddled rack, poised in high air.

Ah, the stork's happy cry when first he rose
Over the city-roofs, and spied full clear

His road athwart the blue—as a fowl goes

On shoulder of West wind—to warm Malay !

A little grieved she that her bird sprang forth
So gladsome. Afterwards—on that same way—

When Spring brings back the storks from South to
North ;

While she did pace towards the Altar-stair,
Out from the clouds that glad cry rang again :
And lo ! th' astonished people were aware
Of a great fowl, which clanged, and left his train

Of friends ranged wedge-wise. Lighting at her feet
There he let fall this beauteous sculptured cup,
And laid his neck against her bosom sweet
For love of her : then, swiftly soaring up,

Was never seen again ! Heraclia
Quaffed from no other vessel, all her life ;
And poisons could not harm her ; nor—books say—
Pains or plagues touch her ; widow, maid, or wife !

But when she died, and this rare goblet lay
Beside her bier, there came a whirr of wing
Under the marble porch ; and bore away
The precious gift. So fell it to the King

Of Coromandel : and when he was slain
In Chittûr, some one hid it in the tank.
I bade my minion fish it up again,
And bear to thee. Drink as Heraclia drank !

N.

NEPHRITE, herewith ! the sea-green China Jade ;

A sacred stone ! If you would magic try

Carve i. 8. i. i on a square well-made,

(Its demon-number) in the charactery

Of hieroglyphs—for Egypt knew this well

And named it Nilion from her ancient river ;

In Babylon 'twas dedicate to Bel ;

Kings sealed decrees therewith ; aye ! and, or ever

A Spaniard's eye from Darien surveyed—

Amazed—the blue Pacific's endlessness,

Those feather-cinctured Aztecs worshipped Jade

And graved their Gods upon it ! Well !—impress

The figures ; set it in pure gold, and breathe

Thrice at the dawning on it, thrice at night,

Repeating "Thoth" five hundred times ; then wreath

A red thread round it—afterwards no wight,

Be he crowned Prince, or Lord, or Common man,
 Saith nay to any wish that shall arise !
 But you—you smile ! knowing how Woman can
 Weave stronger spells with jewels of her eyes.

Leave, then, the amulet. Still,—if you take
 A bead of grey Jade, cut with Shiva's mark,
 'Tis sure—by Hindoo mantras—not one snake
 Will dare to cross your pathway in the dark !

You "will not walk," say you, "where such be found,"
 Eve of a safer Paradise ?—Then, see
 How daintily the pale green Nephrite-ground
 Backs the hot rubies in this jewellery

Of Muslim art ! An Amir's dagger-hilt,
 Patiently polished for his angry hand !
 Note how the damasked waving blade is built
 With blood-channels, and all its beauty planned

To kill, kill, kill ! exquisite devilry
 Of arabesques of death, wrought without joint
 'Mid two pure rows of seed-pearls, running free
 Hither and thither in a slot ; keen point

Like a snake's tooth ! Heed the gold script inlaid
 All up and down the steel like trickling blood !
Ya Jannat—“ Ah, the Garden ! ”—that is said
 To signify one little thrust makes good

The road to Paradise ; and see, writ deep
Bi maruf ullah—“ by God's love and fear,
 To whomso 'tis appointed I bring sleep
 Deeper than poppies ! ” Yet another here—

A lovely masterpiece of mortal spite
 Hafted in delicate Avanturine ;
 Sumptuously set with ruby stars of light
 As if a foeman's gore congealed had been

In drops about the gilded guard : its badge
Al hamdu wa al manat Lillahi
 “ To God be praise and glory ! ” meaning rage
 To consecrate ! And all this gear to see

Of Jade and gems, embellishing mere Hate !
 If craftsmen to cold murder lend such grace
 What should they do for Love ? Ah, Sweetheart, wait !
 My slaves shall seek gifts in a gentler place.

N.

NACRE, and Pearls of Ormuz, now I fetch
From the bright stores of Love's enchanted Palace ;
Know you, perchance, how that poor formless wretch—
The Oyster—gems his shallow moonlit chalice ?

Where the shell irks him, or the sea-sand frets,
There, from some subtle organ, he doth shed
This lovely lustre on his grief, and gets
Peace, and the world his labour, being dead.

Ah, patient foolish fish of the Orient seas !
What else do we, the Poets, serfs of men,
But pour our souls out in soft verse, to ease
Our aches, and die ; and people make us then

Wealth, whence they draw musical ornament
For lovers' use, and sweet wise things to say ;
And wonder if the Lady did relent,
Or keep the pearls, and throw the life away.

For here be pearls, too ; pearls of lucent ray

For some one strung to mark her where she goes

A Pearl of women ; and when others say

“ Oh, you glad Lady ! who did give you those :—

“ Pearls of white thought, pearls of a lasting love ? ”

Then will you finger them on your fair throat,

And answer : “ These came deeper than from grove

Of sea-trees, green beneath the diver’s boat !

“ Full many a fathom down I hanselled them

In heart of him who did not grudge, indeed ;

He would have melted Cleopatra’s gem

In wine of verse, if I had said ‘ I need

“ ‘ New splendours for my necklet ? ’ On one day

I did not know he lived ; and that day’s morrow

I knew he loved me well ; and thence—alway—

I am his peace and pain, his crown and sorrow ! ”

“ Ah,” they will cry, “ for such strong faith, Pardie !

We, now, had shown great favour ; pearls are much ! ”

But thou, wear, and speak nougnt ! —I give them thee

Free of all price, and a king’s hoard of such.

'There was a King promised his beauteous Queen
A virgin necklace of pure matchless pearls
Which ne'er before had worn or threaded been,
Milk-white from where the Arab fisher furls

His sails of mat ; and stoops and plunges in,
And sees the light fade farther from his eyes,
And hears the dreadful, weltering, waters' din ;
Yet dares the agony, and grasps the prize ;—

Sinking a slave, with hardly means to feed ;
Returning, gift-giver to Queens and Kings,—
The brine choking his lips, the bladdered weed
Tangling his feet, but those pale precious things

Safe in his loin-cloth ! And, perchance, one day
He watched the high Sultana pass in state ;
The necklace warm between her breasts, her way
Lined by a worshipping crowd, her sceptred mate

Proud of that pearléd Consort. And his heart
Would laugh within him saying, " Lord of lands !
In what thou lovest I, too, claim a part !
She is so fair because these toilsome hands

“ Tore from the waves their wealth. Yea, Pearl of pearls’
Lulu-’l-maknûn ! than Houris lovelier,
That hast the black eyes of the Prophet’s Girls
Promised in Paradise, and mouth of myrrh ;

“ In next life after this whose wilt thou be,
His that gave gold for thee, or mine, who went
Across the shark’s jaws to the nether sea,
Nigh dead for breath, that thou might’st pace
content ? ”

So, Queen of mine ! I am that Eastern King !
These pearls were never strung which I send thee ;
I ransacked unknown gulfs for them, I bring
New moonlight wonders from an unsailed sea.

Nay, and my Pearl ! I am that Arab Diver !
I stooped and plunged for you into the wave,
Returning rich—yet richer, when forever,
The treasure of the upper air I have ;

If not !—Ah, life’s light quenched, and life’s faith broken !
How fares it with pearl-fisher dead and foiled ?
Lost !—tossing on the billows for a token
Of his large hope, he drifts where he had toiled ;

And sea-birds—which are like sharp thoughts—consume
him ;

And hideous fish—fierce as love-longings—tear
The heart that beat so bold ; and storm-clouds gloom him
Out from the sight of Heaven. Pity him, Dear !

Y.

Ydcut Asfür: so the swart Sonar names
These golden-lighted topazes from Ind:
If you should heed his tale, their yellow flames
Gleam in the dark so that a man may find

A path thereby; or read in Holy Writ;
Or see her lips whose neck lies on his arm;
Also the topaz (levigating it)
Cures sleeplessness, scant breath, and fever's harm;

Soothes anger; strengthens wit; counterchecks spells;
Aids divination, and—on cups inlaid—
If poison lurk within, faithfully tells,
Becoming pale! Albertus Magnus said

It was Draconium—a Dragon's bone—
(Black and pyramidal) which rendered sight
To Theodosius. Nay, indeed, the stone
Was Topaz! Shall I give you this aright?

Twas in those times when birds and beasts could talk,
Who now are wiser than to know too much;
When newer eyes saw Shades and Angels walk;
And younger hands feared not God's hand to touch;

The 'Gesta Romanorum' tells it:—he,
The blind great Cæsar, hung a brazen gong
Before his Palace-gate, whither flocked free
All citizens, and whoso suffered wrong

Might beat the brass and speak—lofty or low—
Into that Emperor's ear, patient reclining;
The purple wrapped around his sightless brow,
But in his soul the Light of Justice shining.

Thus, one day came a snake which had her young
Under the gateway-tower: she, sharply hissing,
Struck with her coils the echoing gong that hung
Against the porch. Thereon, Cæsar—dismissing

The dark-eyed girls who fanned him—cried in Greek
“Have entrance, friend!” And, gliding in, the Snake
Did homage with her crest in dust; then, meek
Addressed the Master of the East: “I make

“ My nest beneath thy wall, where, yesternight,
Safe slept my brood—to me more fair and brave
Than those rich ropes of sards and jacinths bright
Binding thy head-cloth : but, while I, thy slave,

“ Wandered for food, there stole a porcupine
Into my hole, and ate my snakelets three ;
And hath my wonted house, as 'twere not mine !
And will not yield ! Now, therefore, unto me

Grant justice, Cæsar ! ” Then, the sightless King
Gave straight command they kill that beast, and lead
The Serpent safely homeward. And this thing
Was wrought ; and men lightly forgot the deed.

But, on the morrow, at the hour of noon—
When Theodosius on his day-bed slept—
Jewelled with many a jet and amber moon,
And ringed and gilt, a monstrous serpent crept

Over the patterned pavements, clomb the bed ;
And, gliding to the cheek of Cæsar, laid
From its wide jaws,—thick-set with fangs and red,—
A Topaz upon either lid ! Affrayed

The Guards beheld, and would have slain the Worm
Save that it uttered : "Let me pass with life !
Rouse ye your Lord ! then will all men affirm
I pay full court-fees for my righted wife."

And lo ! when Theodosius waked, his eyes
Were purged of cloud ! the blessed beam of Day
Shone once more, his to joy in ; and surprise
Fell on the city. But Love wins alway !

Two marvels hath the Topaz ! When 'tis laid—
The light wine-coloured jewel—in the sun,
Day by day you shall mark its glories fade ;
Golden and crimson lustres, one by one,

Perishing into paleness ! Lesson-laden
The gem's deed is, for see you not a token ?
Was never tender secret of fair maiden
But lost its deep delight in being spoken.

Again, take amber-yellow Topazes !
Heat them—safe-packed in crucible—and lay
All glowing on white stone ; and then, as is
The dying dolphin's change, or shift of Day

Melting to Night, so show the strange adornings
Of this gem cooling: first, like ice it gleams
Hueless, then steals a tender tint of morning's
Soft earliest saffron; afterwards it beams

Such faint pale pink as white hedge-roses blush with;
And last—all suddenly—a rosy glow
Shoots through the stone, as rich as rubies flush with;
Remaining fixed! Who made the Sun doth know

Why this should be! Yet, clasp these jewels, too,
Near to your heart! My next slave flies to bear
Stuff for that structure which I promised you,
A Fairy Palace, richer than Kings rear.





MOONSTONE, and Malachite and Almondine !

These for the Pleasure-Place I build with song,
Since you did say : " Now, lodge me like a Queen !
Feign me a Bower of Fancy ! Love is strong ! "

Here, then, I dream a dream to house you in,
A Palace for my Princess, saying that :
The spot shall be where the great hills begin,
Rolling in dark waves from the Deccan flat.

This way on Maharashtra's plains they look ;
That way to mountains and the Arab sea ;
A forest, full of many a tangled nook,
Clothes the grey crags with green embroidery.

Fair is the scene, and sweet the seasons all ;
The folk Mahrattas ; pastoral, simple, brave.
Thither my fairy architects I call,
And there a lovely Indian home I'd have !

Like to abodes of the East, the stateliest planned,
With white wide walls, high domes, gates gold and red ;
Pillared chabootras, dark with shade, shall stand
Round the first court, where steps of marble spread

Before a pierced-work porch, whereby you pass
To inner coolness, through a columned cloister,
Whose roof—rose-crystal—polished thin as glass,
Lights the veined pavements, all of alabaster.

Scented strange woods shall frame the chamber-doors,
Fountains of fragrant waters will be there ;
Along the ways, and winding stairs, and floors
Delicious things of Art shall make it fair !

Blossoms of unnamed hues and odours fine
Shall deck the courts for you—the Flower of All !
Birds in the orange-walks and lanes of vine
Shall know your name, and come when you do call !

Flowers, too, shall glow of never-fading bloom,
On screens of Jasper wrought, fencing the Bower,
Such as one sees in that white Temple-Tomb,
Reared by great Shah Jehan on Jumna's shore,

To keep for ever famous Mumtaz' name—
The Lady of his Throne—a hundred gems,
Cut to their burning hearts one flower to frame ;
Then inlaid on the slabs, in anadems,

And wreaths, and arabesques of rare conceit,
A changeless garden, where the happy eye
Lights nowhere, but some posy, costly-sweet,
Fills it with joy of daintiest jewellery.

I will have columns such as Solomon
Commanded of his Djins—naming The Name
Cut in the blue of that dread signet stone,
His magic Sapphire ; columns such as came

Across the Aramœan sands, across
The Erythrœan billows ; syenite,
Black porphyry purple-veined, the satin gloss
Of onyx ; coral, crystals, chrysolite,

With abaci of silver. I will have
A milk-white warm pavilion in the midst,
Such as Siddartha, Prince of India, gave
To bright Yasôdhara. Whisper thou didst

That "Love is rich ; " and what, then, shall prevent
 Our Palace with such Amethyst lamps to light
 As gleamed o'er Cleopatra's sleep, and sent
 Rays of soft splendour through th' Egyptian night ;

Dimming Mizâr and Algol ? What forbids
 To ordain such hangings as Aladdin chose
 Of blue and amber silks ; and coverlids
 Stiff with sewn gold and seed pearls ? Ay, or those

Carpets of Iran woven thick with tints
 Of peach and tulip ; and sweet secret times
 Of Leila and Majnûn ; and pictured hints
 Of lovers' bliss ; and tender subtle rhymes

From Persian verse—seggâdehs gay, where fall
 The henna-stained small feet of Shiraz girls
 Softly as snow on roses. Therewithal
 A pleasaunce shall extend, where a stream purls

Cold from the crags, the sunny lawns along,
 Sparkling from stone to stone ; bordered by ranks
 Of blue and crimson lotus, and a throng
 Of plumed palms shading all the dappled banks

With shifting fans ; and underneath the palms,
Moon-flowers, musk-roses, and the silvery spear
Of aloes, and the champak's star of balms,
With milky mogras, breathing far and near

Breath as from Paradise ; Oh, and the walks
(New-watered every dawn) cut low and high
With runnels, where the mountain-water talks
Music to doves and mynas, nesting nigh ;

Ofttimes o'erleaped by golden-coated hordes
Of antelope, the bucks leading the way ;
The limpid-eyed light does following their lords,
Their shyness gone ; friendly, and safe, and gay :

For in our Palace peace and love shall reign,
And all fair creatures of the air and earth
Be friends of man, who, elsewhere, pays his pain
With pain and harm to these ; though Death and Birth

Are one for all, and Life the self-same sadness,
Where Love and Pity rule not ! There shall be
For gentle service faces full of gladness ;
Willing swift feet, and happy vassalry ;

For good it is to obey where Love is master,
And freest he who serves the noblest Queen ;
Therefore, thou minister ! bring—fast and faster—
Moonstone, and Malachite, and Almondine !

A.

AQUAMARINE—from Fancy's treasure-hall !

Yet sad to-day for me this sea-green stone ;
For on the Channel-sands your light feet fall,
And I, among these millions, walk alone.

But, wave-stained jewel ! shine with brighter thought !

It was across the Deep—years back—she came ;
The billows, which are of thy colour, brought
That gentle face to us. For this I name

The Beryl, water-tinted, as one stone
To spell you. On its lucent face is writ
μακρὸν ἀπεστι τόπος—“ all alone,
Far hence, among the wine-dark waves, they sit.”

The “ happy Isles,” he means, who carved that line ;
For ancient sailors told a mystic story .
How some had seen, had touched—in joy divine—
Makarōn nēsous, at the “ Groups of Glory,”

The sweet "Sea-Paradise"—so hints this Greek!

Ah, if wave-coloured gem could guide us there;
And we, far voyaging, might sight some peak
Unknown, unnamed—cleaving the tranquil air

With pinnacles which feel no storm, and steeps
Lawny and lovely, where Death does not come,
Nor change, nor hate, nor care; but alway sleeps
The purple main around the perfect home!

Where we should find delightful friends and lovers,
And hear no word of woe on any lip;
Opening glad eyes, as when the Dawn discovers
A sky of blue and gold, and ill dreams slip

Back to that gloom which bred them: where the wonder
Of "whence" and "why" and "whither" would be
known;
And we should lie, like Gods, above the thunder,
The Past perceived, the Future sure and shewn;

Such were great magic! But the Isles in mind
Rise farther than the farthest ocean, Dear!
Thither to sail—with e'er so fair a wind—
Asks more than toil of many a wandering year!

We shall not reach them, save with Earth for vessel,
Sky for our sea, and for long voyage Life;
But if Love steers, at last our sails may nestle,
Furled in those far-off Isles—past storm and strife.

R.

RUBIES, with Pearls ! That's Nature's jewellery !

Look in your mirror when you speak my name,
And while you say it you may plainly see
Those charming reasons why I write the same ;

Pearl-rows which gleam through rose-leaf lips of grace—
• • • •

Ah, no !—I will not weave such worn-out posies ;
I had a higher fancy for this place
Than rhymes which jingle “ rubies, pearls, and roses.”

For these are *Mânikas*—stones true and good,
Which my spell brings from Burmah's steaming grove.
Such have the colour of the drop of blood
Shed on the white neck of a wounded dove.

Of such was carved the magic vial filled
With water from the “ Fount of Youth ” that wells
Behind the “ Sea of Darkness ; ” water spilled
By Sultan Suleiman. Ben Ali tells

This legend, done in Persian, from the Book
“Lights of Canopus”—how the Hebrew Khan
Sate on the cloud-roofed mountain-tops which look
This way on Ind, that way to Khorasan.

Angels and Djins and Peris round the king
Paid homage, mixed with man and beast and bird,
For on his finger was the Sapphire-ring
Graved with the name of God, which whoso heard,

Hearing, obeyed. Wherefore the Eagles flew
Against the sun, to shade him; she-bears brought
Wild honey; snakes their jewels; flowers upgrew
To make a footstool for his feet. Outraught

Over the Earth his sceptre none withstanded
In lands, or seas, or nether-worlds, or sky
Where—like to glassy fish in glassy flood,
Blue in blue hyaline—the Spirits lie

Unviewed, but living: and, this thing was seen;
There drifted from the Pass a darksome cloud
Which, gliding nigh—the mountain-crests between,—
Took vast and filmy form, at first a shroud

That seemed to wrap some phantom-head ; but, soon
A shape of grace whose light and colour gleamed
From gold of setting sun, pearl of new moon,
With wings of waving sapphire, hair which streamed.

Curled jacinth on the breeze ; garments of amber
Draped vaguely from an azure girdle-band ;
Great breasts of rounded rose, veils that enchamber
A half-spied awful countenance ; a hand

Slow-issuing from the shade, holding a cup
Cut from the sunset's ruby,—light compressed
To solid splendour—“ Drink this liquor up ! ”
A voice cried : “ drink, dread King ! The high behest

“ Of Him Whose Name is on thy Signet-Stone
Wills I bring water from the Well of Life ;
Of all men, Suleiman ! to thee alone
God proffers this ! a draught with power so rife

“ That, quaffing it, thy flesh and blood shall take
Even as an Angel's, comely, changeless youth ;
Days without end, delights of sense to make
Immortal years seem few ; insight of Truth

“ Such as thy Soul hath craved for. Drink or spill !
Have here this Vessel with its dancing draught ;
My errand is performed ! Judge how ye will,
Suleiman and the Counsellors ! ” . A waft

Of sighing wind scattered the waning shape ;
In the King’s grasp the Ruby Vial shone ;
Far down the Pass—from splintered cape to cape—
Faded the breaking cloud-flecks, one by one.

But, when the strange Voice ceased, Suleiman mused :—
“ Yea ! good it were to drink this gift of God ;
Good to repair my days and nights misused,
Treading with wiser steps life’s ways retrod :

“ Good to win back the fiery speed of youth
In veins which slacken ; good to ever guard
My kingdom ; to strip bare beautiful Truth
With eyes undimmed, heart’s hot desire unmarr’d,

“ Wholly possessing her, naked and pure ;
Myself ever renewed, joyous, and strong ;
Good, too, it were to have my years endure,
That God’s fair Temple,—which I fashion long—

“ May grow to perfect glory ; and my wars
 Close in sure peace,—I seeing, age by age,
 My people prosper under wider stars,
 In larger lands ; till, on the great last page

“ Of this World’s Book Suleiman’s name shall shine !
 Yea ! I will drink ! Yet, ye who gather near,
 Djins ! Angels ! Beasts and Fowls, Servants of mine !
 How counsel ye your King ? Fain would I hear.”

With loud acclaim, “ Drink, happy King ! ” said they ;
 And one with dark plumes folded, evil-eyed,
 Sakhrah the Dev—who, later, stole away
 Suleiman’s signet-ring—low bending, cried :

“ Drink, Lord of Lords ! the gold of youth is bright,
 And dull the silver of slow-creeping eld ;
 And dear are wealth and power ; and soft the night
 By dawn of lovely ladies’ eyes dispelled ! ”

And Shîr the Djin spake :—knowing magic best—
 “ Drink, Friend of God ! the Earth’s weal rests on thee
 As sleeps an infant on a nursing breast ;
 It were not well thy Throne should vacant be ! ”

And Amberin the Peri, gliding close
With flutter of white plumes, said, "Drink, my King !
The joys of men and Devs in thee repose
As gems are held in cirque of golden ring !"

Assad the Lion answered for the beasts,
Laying his shagged mane at the Monarch's feet,
"Drink, Master of all forests ! Thy brave feasts
Have known no wine like this, subtle and sweet !"

And Sag, the Seal, moist from the Indian main,
Drooped his black fins, and bellowed : "Sovereign,
drink !

The Water-creatures and the Fish are fain
That thou shouldst live for ever !" From the brink

Of Baikal flew the Locust, chirping : "Khan !
Drink ! for all things which burrow, creep, and buzz,
Trust thee to help them, helping beast and man :
And Who doth raise the dead from one bone, Luz,

"Gives thee at one draught Angelhood !" Spake last
Hud-hud, the Lapwing, piping : "I have seen
The glory of Queen Balkis now o'erpassed ;
Drink, Lord ! for never such a gift hath been !"

But glancing sternly round, quoth Suleiman :
 “ Are all things here ? Hath none some other rede ?
 Lo ! ere I drink, and pass to God from Man,
 Is every counsel uttered ? ” “ Hast thou need,

“ Great King ! ” the hill-fox barked, “ to hear what word
 Kûmri will speak ? She tarrieth on her nest !
 I spied her in the thorns ! ” “ Send forth a bird
 To summon her ! ” quoth he. At such behest
 Came Kûmri, flying from her tree ; the Dove
 Who hath the neck of purple, and the wings
 Of silver, and the breast filled full of love :
 Heaven’s softest creature. Spake she : “ King of
 Kings,

“ Pardon thy handmaid that she stayed to brood
 Twin eggs which must not chill ! Thy dread command
 Passed unto me, and I have left my wood !
 What dost thou with the red cup in thy hand ? ”

“ I hold from Heaven a draught of life immortal,
 The Mâ-ul-Haiyat ! ” Suleiman replied :
 “ If I shall quaff, Death’s dark and hateful portal
 Never can gape for me ! ” Then, Kûmri sighed :

“ Ah, mighty Lord ! how should a little bird,
 Which only knows to nest and brood and coo,
 Counsel great Suleiman ? Yet be this heard ;
 Hath He, Who gave the water, given, too,

“ The boon that whosoever holds thy heart,—
 Queen, lover, friend, concubine, daughter, son—
 May in the magic potion take their part ?
 For then this guerdon were a precious one ! ”

“ Nay ! ” the King said, “ to me alone the cup !
 Not larger, see ! than those eggs thou didst leave !
 I am commanded—if I will—to sup
 Its last bright drop ! ” Then, moaned the Dove :
 “ I grieve

“ They counsel thee to drink ; for all will go,
 Thy Queens, thy children, ministers, and slaves ;
 Thy best belov’d will be as last year’s snow
 On these hot mountains ! Thou wilt rule mid graves,

“ Dead—thou though livest—with thy dead ; and see
 Lip after lip, pressed once to thy lip, press
 The bitter brim of Fate’s black cup ; and be
 Sad in thy splendour, with such loneliness

“ As deserts know not, nor the lifeless main :
Thy Earth around thee will grow old and grey ;
Thy Kingdoms pass ; thy fields fall wild again,
But thou—too favoured—shalt be young alway

“ With memory only old ; yet, that will taste
Death in the dust which blows from every tomb ;
Death in the flowers which wave in every waste,
Death in the mid-day light, death in the gloom !

“ Lord of all Kings ! forgive ! Love bids me speak !
If her mate cometh not the wild dove dies !
I would not drink hereof, who am so weak,
Lest I might lose by gaining : Love is wise !”

Thereon departed Kûmri—flying hard
To find her nest ere the twin eggs should chill :
And Suleiman the King, upon the sward
With eager hand the magic draught did spill.

I.

IDOCRASE! Garnet from the Hills of Flame

A stone thus known hides in dark Hentha's glade
Which, when the Indians find, with joy they name,
And—proving—toil no more; their gain is made:

The “Noble Garnet!” There the colour lives
So fine and rich no wheel can cut it dim:
Flake it, or break it, every splinter gives
One glorious crimson glow from core to rim;

The colour of the blood of a man's heart
When—between red and purple—it doth sweep
Through the chief vein of all; nay, or a part
Of the heart's self, carved where the life lies deep.

So if you say “such praise is common speech!”
And “I have heard these tender things before!”
Ah, Sweetheart! let my Indian Garnets teach
A better word to you, a wiser lore;

For these are cut, Dear ! from a heart of faith ;
 The colour of Love's blood within them glows.

Know you a mystical Purâna saith
 There lurks in Balkh, under the lower snows,

A gem so hued, like purple wine congealed,
 Styled *Chintasiddhi* (that's "Desire fulfilled"),
 And, whoso lighteth on it, goes afield
 Where two streams meet ; and—water being spilled

From forth his palm to all six quarters—then
 He whispers " OM "—the stone laid on his tongue,
 And therewith, from the forest or the glen,
 A red she-wolf advances, great with young,

Who speaks a word ; and, if the man hath learned
 The counter-word, that wolf will whine and moan ;
 And—sudden—to a red-haired woman turned
 Cry out : " I am the Servant of the Stone ! "

" Command me as thou wilt ! ". Then, if he wills
 A feast be spread for him on plates of gold ;
 A palace builded in the hidden hills,
 With courts and gardens wondrous to behold ;

Or, if he will a magic horse with wings
To bear him through the Blue ; or mail of proof
No steel can pierce ; or if his fancyings
Lean towards lovely wives, or wealth, or woof

Of Kashmir silks with warp of silver thread,
Or pearls, or poisons—she with blood-bright locks
Fetcheth them all ! You shake a dubious head ?
You think the heathenish Purāna mocks ?

Oh, but the Talmud hath a passage, Dear !—
The grave, great Talmud—telling how one flouted
Rabbi ben Zachai, at the hour of prayer,
Who said, while that rash unbeliever doubted,

Jahveh would build gates for Jerusalem
Of pearls and garnets, measuring every way
Full thirty cubits—every stone of them—
And cut them to ten cubits ; and so lay

Thresholds and lintels. Yet, that scorner laughed !
But, next moon, sailing on the Joppa sea,
A white wave cast him over, and he quaffed
Salt drink of Death, down-sinking horribly ;

And touched the oozy bed ; and saw—affrayed,—
Sea-angels there, who rolled great pearls and stones
Full thirty cubits broad and long ; and made
Blocks of their mighty beauty. So his bones

Quaked at the sight, for all their angry eyes
Burned on him ; and he spake : “ Oh, Angels ! say
Why cleave ye these ? ” They answered, in stern wise,
“ We cleave these pearls and carbuncles to lay

The portals of the Holy City ! ” Judge
If he came back in better mind—what time
They washed his mouth clean of the weeds and sludge,
And heard his trembling tale ! Ah, Darling ! rhyme

Relates not half the marvels which lie hid
Behind our mocking light ! My next slave goes
To stranger spots than he ; and, since I bid,
Brings thee a Gem from Aaron’s breast-plate rows.

A.

THE third row of the holy Breast-Plate stood
“Agate, and Ligure, and an Amethyst.”
Great Jewels, graven with the tribes of God,
Hallow my page ! and thou, be thy brow kissed

By Seraphim, as I hang this above it ;
Thy hands held up by Cherubim to pray ;
Thy soul made sure that splendid spirits love it ;
Thy feet set fast upon the blissful way !

For, though I bring thee hither but in fiction
“Ephod of blue and gold,” with mystic gem,
Let my verse pass, but be its benediction
Lasting, and crown thee like a diadem !

Since prayer fulfils itself which rises rightly
From lips by gentle love made true and sweet ;
So, let these belted Agates glitter brightly ;
As when Haroün cast beneath his feet

Coats of the camp, and donned white robe and mitre ;

And round his waist the “curious girdle” tied ;

And drew the thongs and gilded ouches tighter,

Hanging his breast-plate high—Oh, beautified

By wondrous work of “gold and blue and crimson,

On fine-twined cloth”—the gold beat out four-square

A span each way ; and gold chains linked the rims on,

With fourfold ranks of jewellery set fair,—

First Sardius, Topaz, and the Jaspis green ;

Next Smaragd, Sapphire, and an Adamant ;

Third, Ligure, Agate, Amethyst were seen

Laid on chased beddings ; and the fourth line burnt

With Beryl, Onyx, Chrysolite : each stone

Carved with a Tribal name ! And he would go

Behind the Veil ; where—shut from Earth, alone—

He saw and heard what Israel might not know ;

For there the Ark was, and the Cherubim

Beat from pure gold, with golden pinions spread

Shading the Mercy-Seat. There God with him

Talked ; and none other heard the dread words said.

But, if the days were evil—if the camp
Had sinned—the Agate changed its white to black ;
Waned the green Smaragd like a dying lamp ;
The Sapphire half its heavenly blue did lack !

Ah ! if our gems of human love we bore
Behind that Veil, would many—any—keep
Their beauty of the laughing Day ? Would more
Be dimmed, than brightened ? See what legions weep

Of love-lorn maids for wooers proved untrue !
What cohorts of true wooers curse false maids !
Let us not enter in ! Enough, if you
Are fair, and I your poet fond, who braids

These jewelled fancies for your hair ! At last,
I think where Love has lived, it cannot die ;
Its flame may wane, its lustrous light seem past,
But what once shone shines on eternally !

Yes ! lift the Veil ! In that dread darkness pray I
Heaven make your years all happy—till we know—
Th' Angelic peace compass and fill you—say I—
And God's love come when Earthly love must go !

A

AMBER ! You shall have Amber beads to bind
Your smooth brown hair—threaded with Lazulite !
I send my minion on swift wings to find
These hidden spoils of Earth for your delight :

And when—round the Madonna's painted head—
You limn aërial backgrounds, do you know
That the soft azures which your pencils spread
Come from this Lazulite—gold-spangled so ?

“ Ultramarina,”—those same sea-blue stones—
Dug from dark caverns fringing Baikal's lake—
The lucent airs, and large etherial tones,
And passages of painter's skies do make.

I think if you should delve such Lazulite
As hides within my heart—all gold and blue—
The gold of it would make your days seem bright,
The blue of it might arch fair skies for you :

Well ! take or leave ! You are too rich to need it ;
And love is sorrow—so say all the wise—
Though lovers never yet have deigned to heed it,
Since first your sweet sex cost us Paradise !

Is Love so sad ? This Amber, clear and golden,—
Wept from great trees which, when the woods began,
Waved boughs, it may be, over lovers olden,
Shaded their slumbers, built primeval man

His nuptial bowers : for, see ! the bead encloses
Winged things which fluttered in life's goodlihead ;
Here is embalmed memory of meadow-roses,
An epitaph on unseen summers dead.

So, too, for me, the Indian name of Amber
Enshrines the pathos of a Buddhist page :—
Ah, now ! no story for a lady's chamber !
Only the fable of some old-world Sage !

Yet, you shall hear : she was Suvarna, " Shining,"—
The soft word pictures all the grace we praise
In Beauty's inner beam, subtly combining
Body and Soul, a perfumed lamp whose rays

Gleam dim through alabaster. Legends note us
Her "eighteen perfect points," the fragrant hair ;
The eyes clear-cut as petals of the lotus ;
The shapely nose, the little faultless pair

Of ears carved shell-wise, and the close-set bosoms
Rounded "like tortoise-shell ;" the brown soft arms ;
Small hands, fine feet, mouth "red as bimba-blossoms,"
Gait of a pacing roe, form showing charms

Like Sachi's, Queen of Heav'n. Lords did adore her,
Ranas and Khans from many wondrous lands :—
Kings came on elephants to kneel before her,
Their kingdoms' jewels in their humbled hands.

When she would dance it seemed like Music moving,
Visible, living ! When she sang, the Rose
Forgot its nightingale ! the Koil loving
Stayed in his midway note to listen close !

When one had seen Suvarna—says my story—
Fresh from the bath, in robes of gold and red,
Her beauty glittering forth with youth's full glory,
Glad, in her palace, on an ivory bed ;—

All women seemed her shadows ! Still—'tis written—
 Lovers were many, but belovèd none :
 Not once with Kama's arrow sank she smitten ;
 This sun-light Lady wearied of the sun !

Then she heard Buddha preach ; and fierce upon her
 Fell passion for that holiness he taught :
 She would 'Bhikshûni' live ; no heart should own her !
 Freed should her soul be, and her footsteps brought

Into the "Noble Path !" So went she lonely
 Climbing the hill-side to Lord Buddha's Cave ;
 Hungering for Rest and Righteousness,—those only—
 Thirsting for sweet melodious words which save.

But, on the midmost steep, whose rugged ways
 Wounded the rose-red palms of her light feet,
 A streamlet brimmed a pool : Suvarna stays
 To sit and drink the water cool and sweet.

Thus, bending in the shadow of the mountain
 To dip her hand and sip the crystal wave,
 Like a steel mirror the translucent fountain
 Back to her gaze her own bright image gave.

There was the braided splendour of her tresses !
 There the deep wonder of her large dark eyes !
 There the brown neck and breast, made for caresses,
 The flower-soft mouth, the shadowed charm which lies

In curve of nape, and sweep of silken shoulder ;
 The supple tapering waist, the swelling round
 Of hip and shapely limb :—her own beholder
 Suvarna marvelled at the form she found.

“ Was I so fair ? ” she sighed : “ Well might they love
 me,
 Rajas and Sirdars ! And what days we had,
 Good, glorious days ! before the ache did move me
 To hear this Rishi. Am I sane or mad

“ To mount his hill ? The Gods have given me beauty
 As to the Ketuk-flower they gave perfume ;
 And gold bands to their bees ! Is it not duty
 The bee should suck the honey of the bloom ? ”

Therewith her tears welled, falling—pearl by pearl—
 Into the pool, which broke its glass with ripples ;
 Vanished the image ! Then the Indian Girl
 Tied the silk choli-strings beneath her nipples ;

And drew her sari round ; and, rising, turned,
Taking the downward path, and softly saying :
“ Nay !—for such grace and youth must not be spurned !
I was not made for penance and for praying :

“ Some last, best, lover waits me ! ” So, she runs
Laughing, adown the slope—distantly hearing
Gay murmurings of the town, and pleasant tones
Of pipe and lute ; and feet of hamals bearing

Brides to their bridegrooms, “ They who will may tread
The Noble Road,” quoth she, “ be mine the valley
Where pleasure lives ! ” But Buddha overhead—
Calm in his cave—beheld Suvarna’s folly ;

And pitied her ; and, pitying, sought to save :
So (saith the tale) by magic utterance stripping
His own form off, assumed the aspect, brave
And winsome, of a Nautch-Girl, feately tripping

Along the Damsel’s path ; more heavenly fair,
Comelier and brighter than Suvarna’s brightness ;
With tender wistful gaze, and gracious air,
Soft happy smile, and steps of dancing lightness.

Amazed, enchanted, "Ah, thou loveliest One!"

Suvarna cries: "Oh, not of Earth, but Heaven!
What is thy name? what errand goest thou on?

Beautiful, perfect, Sister! art thou given

"To comfort and confirm me? Come with me!"

Answered the stranger,—soft as running water,
Or wood-doves cooing—"Sweet such company!

I am content!" And so Suvarna brought her

With tender hand in tender hand enlacing,

And hearts close-beating, and commingling eyes,
Far down the hill. As that bright pair went pacing,
Melted with gentle love Suvarna sighs:

"Shiva! how fair thou art! th' Asoka's honey

Draws not the sunbird as thou drawest me!

More than to list the wisdom of the Muni

It were to rest thy head upon my knee,

"And weave thy waist a girdle with mine arms,

And press a thousand times thy mouth of wonder:

Dear! let us sit—the sun grows hot! thy charms

Ask shade, like palm-buds in the month of thunder!"

So sate they down ; and, locked in close embraces
Fed on each other's fairness—love for love—
Hands joined, arms twined, locks intermixed, soft faces
Nestled together like a dove with dove :

Till, fondling her to rest, her silk lids kissing,
Toying with taper hands, and smooth dark skin,
Suvarna's self sank into sleep, yet pressing
That beanteous maid her circling arms within.

All the fierce noon and afternoon they slumber ;
At eve the Indian girl, starting, awoke :

I said this was no tale for lady's chamber !
Ah, can you bear to hear what terror broke
On sad Suvarna's gaze ? Clasped to her heart
A festering corpse tainted the air ; its bones
Ridged the shrunk flesh ; the putrid inward part
Blotched it with green and purple ; cold as stones

Glared its glazed orbs ; all the fair grace was fled
Like gold fruit mouldered, or a lily's crown
Withering to foulness ! Oh, that awful Dead !—
Suvarna flung her horrid playmate down,

And shrieked, veiling her eyes ; and ran a space,
 Wringing her palms. Then, nigh at hand, she saw
 Lord Buddha looking on her tearful face
 With countenance of majesty and awe.

“ Daughter ! ” spake he, “ for this thing thou hast left
 The path which should have led thee unto bliss !
 Lo ! as the flower fades and the fruit is reft,
 Love ends in parting, Beauty fails to this !

“ As she was, so shalt thou be, and thy kind !
 Nay, if it chagrined thee to kiss a skull,
 Be done with Love ! always—red lips behind—
 Grin those white jaws for flames of funeral !

“ And worse things be than funeral pyres, or parting ;
 The Spirit, sick with passion and sweet pain,
 Flits back from Death to Life for direr starting
 On Earth’s wild wheel, and builds its house again :

“ Since, what thou art, thou makest ! Trishna breeds it !
 Thine is the prison, and the gaoler thou !
 The snake which poisons man his own heart feeds it ;
 Yet—if thou wilt—wake from this madness now,

“ Vanquish thy longings ! Come ! there is no sorrow
Like Pleasure ; no delight like passions slain !
But if thou lust for life the stern To-morrow
Will find thee lost in thy self-chosen gain,

“ As the grey crane dies by the dried-up lake
Where she laid foolish eggs. Meditate Truth !
Enter the Noble Way ! Wise barter make
For blest Nirvâna with thy grace and youth ! ”

.

Then did Suvarna, with impatient hand,
Tear from her neck the amber beads and gold ;
Shook down her tresses from their jewelled band,
And cut, and cast them from her ; wild and bold ;

And meekly followed Buddh. Was that done well ?
Ah, Love ! love is so lovely, who can say ?
I only know this life ! if Love be Hell
Then Hate is Heaven ! Let us not go her way !

D.

DIAMONDS ! Now—womanlike—your eyes grow brighter
 Flashing the sparkle back of such fair things ;
Hold both hands up ! I sent a demon-fighter
 To wrest these wonders from barbaric kings :

Mâsh, almâsh, hîra, hêtih ! white, and blue,
 The flaming golden sort, the black, and pink !
Here be brave carcanets and cirques for you
 A-blaze with beams, cut sunlike ! Did you think

Poets were poor ? Nay ! if our fancy choose
 To delve old Earth, down to her deepest treasures,
Or spoil black-bearded Sultans, see ! the Muse
 Denies her children no such airy pleasures.

And wise men wot Golcondâ's brilliant gem,
 Tried in the fire, turns black, mere common fuel.
But these, my fairy stones, outvalue them,
 Time-proof and flame-proof ! Here's a beauteous jewel

My minion brings—the “ Syamantakan ; ”
 Satrājita the King worshipped the Sun
 At dawning when his rosy course began,
 At evening when his golden road was run ;

Reciting holy *Gayatri*, and given
 To all high deeds, a pious Prince and tried ;
 Wherefore one morn—’tis said—that Lord of Heaven,
 The Regent of the Sun, stood by his side ;

Unclasped a crest-gem from his crown, and bound it
 On Prince Satrājita, bending in prayer,
 The folk of Dwāraka, much-wondering, found it
 At the King’s throat, burning the dazzled air

With beams of glory : and the influence shed
 From that enchanted stone caused rain to fall ;
 Averted serpents, pests ; quickened the dead ;
 Brought victories to the Realm, fortune to all

If good men wore it ; but an evil one
 Died of its lustre. Oh, you laugh ! yet listen :
 Prasēna, the King’s brother, put it on
 And rode a-hunting with that gem a-glisten

Over his head-cloth ; and a Lion slew
 Horseman and horse ; but Jāmbabān the Bear
 Killed the strong beast, and took the spoil, and threw
 The sun-gem to his youngest cub to wear :

For Krishna tracked their foot-prints ; pierced the wood ;
 Came to the cavern black, heard the Bear mother
 Say : “ Sleep, my Babe ! now will our days be good ;
 This is the Sun’s great Diamond, and none other ! ”

She, seeing Krishna, “ Ahi ! ahi ! ” roared :
 Then Jāmbabān rushed forth, and waged fierce fight ;
 But lost the Sun-stone to its doughty Lord ;
 Who died a-bed, slain for that jewel bright.

A wild, rude, Sanskrit story ! Yes ; but wrought
 With touches of old wisdom ’broidered in it !
 Flash ‘ Syamantakan ’ in light of thought
 And note this gleam :—white knowledge, if we win it,

Is granted from One Source—for joy or dolour—
 To whomso hath it, Prince, or Man, or Beast,
 Yet, as each crystal by its inner colour
 Stains the pure beam enkindled from the East,

So shall the nature of each soul, endoubled
By will on mind, dye fair or dark that ray.
Oh, you may wear this Diamond, Dear ! untroubled ;
Look ! on your neck it glitters clear as Day !

E.

EMERALDS ! The colour, Fanny ! of the light
Sifted through lime-leaves on a summer-noon ;
Or curl of crested wave, when foam-bells bright
Fringe the green furrows of the sea in June.

Such should true emeralds be ! green—it is said—
As throat of parroquet ; or spark quick-twinkled
From fire-fly's lamp ; or fresh unfolded blade
Of water-grass ; or lotus-leaf unwrinkled

New risen 'mid the pool, or glow which fringes
The gleaming amethysts in the peacock's train :
Sourindro Mohun holds “ all Virtue hinges
On tints like these, and, if there show a stain

Yellowish or clouded, do not seek to heal
Snake-bites with such, nor carve a love-name on
them ! ”
But mine are ‘ Marakats ’ whose hearts reveal
Greener and greener glories as you con them ;

A necklace for a queen! Not that you need it!

One gem-mark was already on your neck
Set by the Power who made us—as I read it—
Your throat with one soft little foil to speck

For contrast's sake: as lovely dames, who brightened
With high-bred charms King Louis' court or Anne's,
Laid on their damask cheeks patches which heightened
The tender pink, just spied above their fans.

Yet, be you heedful of this lucent jewel,
Soft as the moon-ray seen through leaf-green waves
By those sea-maids whose love, earnest but cruel,
Draws down the sailor, dead, to their cold caves:

For wise men write that, like as diamonds hidden
Under the pillow of a sleeping bride,
Will make her closed lips open, all-unbidden,
To tell if ever any lips beside

Touched their ripe crimson, so the Emerald's hue—
By reason that this is the stone of Faith—
Reports when plighted lovers prove untrue,
Ever so widely parted! Mansoor saith:

It burgeons for true love, like sprays of henna ;

But withers, at a broken vow to white,

Or falls in tintless fragments. Avicenna

Bade breathe upon it, at the morning light,

And, if the One belov'd were false, a mist

Would pass athwart its verdant lustre, telling
Of oaths forsworn ! When frail Zuleika kissed

Yusuf,—her Lord, in Pharaoh's palace dwelling,

Knew by his signet. Doubt you that was so ?

Yet think how stones are built in Earth's abysses !

What wonderful dark secrets Gnomes must know !

How they may hear men's whispers, sighs, and kisses,

Living in gems—as Celsus held they live !—

When George the Third was throned, an emerald fell

Out from his crown ; and, did the Fates forgive ?

America was lost ! you know it well !

But still you smile—American by birth—

Thinking that loss a gain ! Well, I'll be grave !

Esteem the emerald noblest stone of Earth

When you shall hear the Queen of Sheba gave

An emerald vase to Suleiman the King,
Cut from the mother-crystal—flawless, shining—
By life-long labour. Oh, a perfect thing,
Leek-green, playing to blue and gold ! Reclining

Within his summer-tent Suleiman bade
Amru his steward bear it to the Palace :
At the first step which bearded Amru made
Down sank he dead ! The precious carven chalice

Had fall'n, in ruined beauty ; but, a wretch—
White with the third degree of leprosy—
Begging against the gate, his arm did stretch,
And caught the glowing cup,—and saved ! And see !

Clean grew his flesh, again, as babe's new-born !
Then the King gave command Balkis the Queen,
Be brought to audience on the morrow's morn ;
And, awful-eyed, he told what deeds had been :

How this was dead, that healed. But she replied,
Low-laughing ; “ King ! It was not cut to give
Into the hands of liars ! Amru died
Touching the Gem of Truth ; thy slave will live

“ Henceforward whole, because whole was his mind !

The mother-stone of this had virtues vast ;

Only true lips must touch it ! False will find

Thy Hermon honey slay therein ! ”Twill cast

“ All ills from such as keep a sinless heart ! ”

Then quoth King Suleiman, “ Which man is he,
Save my poor Syrian who did bear the smart

Of God’s hard hand—yet love Him ? Let him be

“ My Steward ! Let the dreadful Cup be laid

Within the Temple of the Lord ! ” So fell it
To keeping of the Priests. When Cæsar made
Judæa a spoil, some Roman lord did sell it

To one who kept that “ furnished upper room ”

In whose sad walls the Master sate at meat
With His disciples, ’ere the deed of doom,
And the Last Supper’s bread did meekly eat ;

And the Last Supper’s wine meekly did pour,

Saying : “ These be my Body and my Blood !
Do this in my remembrance ! ” At that hour
The emerald cup of Sheba ’twas which stood

At Christ's right hand ; and in that cup did glisten
The noblest wine which ever vine did shed ;
Soothing with peace the souls of all who listen,
Feeding the spirits of the quick and dead.

Then the Crusaders won it ! Ninety fell
Fighting round Godefroi for the beaker golden :
That Cup which kissed the mouth of Christ—they tell—
Was wet with gore ! A Paynim of the Soldan

Lay, slain by twenty wounds, clutching the thing.
The soldiers of the Cross freighted a ship—
Proud Genoa's swiftest caravel—to bring
The prize to Italy : and no man's lip

Dared touch it, all those quiet centuries
It lay in San Lorenzo. Next, it came
To France,—or Spain, some tell : but he, who is
Our Master, and the noblest English name

Of living singers—holds (in Arthur's lay),
Arimathœan Joseph brought it here
To Glastonbury, where the black-thorn spray
Blossoms at Christmas, every mindful year ;

Nay, that one saw it ! saw the glorious Grail !

(Percival's Sister—pious, meek, a maid)

Glide, with a sudden radiance, rosy, pale,

Down a long silvery moon-path, through the shade :

“ Rosy,” “ rose-red ”—he sings—“ and, in it, beatings,

As though alive,” and music, heavenly-tender

Better than we can blow or touch, with meetings

Of tones celestial ; and a burning splendour

Of Angels' feathers, fanning airs unfelt ;

And crimson samite draped ; and stars which darted

Hither and thither, leaving lines that melt

In sparkles on the Blue ; and dim shapes started

Forth from the Void ! Yet, only three,—or two—

Believed with Arthur ; he “ who knew alway

Himself no vision, and the high God knew

No vision,” nor Lord Christ. But still I say

The Cup was Emerald, glassy-green ! I trow

Where now it is, but dare not have it given ;

Could even Galahad dare ? Could Arthur ? No !

Dear lips of Christ ! Rich wine, vintaged in Heaven !

L.

LIGURE ! the holy ‘Leshem,’ now I bring,
Judæa’s Gem, Jacynthus styled of old :
Mark how the sunbeams flood with gold this thing,
And how its dark heart stains th’ imparted gold !

Jacynth, the stone which has a sister-flower ;
The jewel wine-red, and the blossom, too :
These both were snow-white once, until the hour
When God Apollo Hyacinthus slew.

Ever since then *à*, *à* is on the blossom
And *à* *à* writ upon the stone as well ;
And the life-blood from the Greek boy’s hurt bosom
Mars both with blackness,—so old legends tell.

Ligures they wore, set in an iron torque
At Rome, on midnights, laying Lémurës
When May’s Ides came, for then the Ghosts did walk ;
Then were the *Lemuralia*. All the trees

Drowsed in the Court ; streets sleeping still—no sound !
Save if an owl screeched, or a town-dog bayed
Seeing the sheeted Shades pass o'er the ground
Tip-toe, a-glide, with eyes which made afraid.

But he would steal—the House-master—barefoot,
Softly, not speaking any word for dread ;
Yet snapping oft his fingers, if some root
Of vine or fig tripped him, like some one dead

At devilish tricks. But, when—all mute—he came
Safe to the fountain, there he laved his face,
And hands ; and rubbed the Ligure, whispering name
Of every restless Lar haunting the place.

Next in his mouth he put the nine beans black,
But must not glance behind, turning to go ;
While, one by one, he flung them o'er his back,
Muttering "*his fabis meam redimo*

Domum !" "With these black beans I buy content."
Ite, paterni Manes ! "Good Souls, quit !" Then, nine times beat a sheet of brass, and sent
The Ghosts to Hades, where their fellows flit.

Poor Ghosts ! Love would not fear ! Love dreads not death,

Nor doom, nor darkness ! See this Jacynth brought From Hedjaz ! On its gold a verse which saith “With thee was well, Belovëd !”—and, inwrought

The Cross of Christ with Islam’s crescent moon ! . . .

A Christian maiden loved a Muslim youth, And he loved her ; oh, heart and soul, Majnûn Loved Mariam the Nazarene. In sooth

One look wrought all ! Young Majnûn did repair Mosque-wards to pray ; the loud-voiced Muazan Stood white against the blue ; in either ear Pressing his thumb, and crying, “*Ash'had-do-an*

La-illah'l-lul-la-ho !” “Ye Faithful ! know. There is no God but God !” *Hya ul-as-salaat* “Quicken your steps to pray !” *As-sal-la-to* *Khyrun min an-naum*, “Better, Believers ! that Ye pray than sleep !” This cry was in his ears, The faith of Allah in his heart firm kept ; When Mariam passed—and glanced : and lo ! the years Found their crowned instant : Love, full-plumed, up leapt !

Beautiful was she as upon its stalk
 The tulip newly nodding ; heavenly-sweet
 The music of her voice ; when she did walk
 The glad grass seemed to kiss her light fine feet !

Face, form, as 'twere a Houri in the house ;
 Eyes so divinely lustrous that their splendour
 Filled every heart with worship ; and her brows
 Drawn like black bows over the eyelids tender,

And shadowy lashes ; and her teeth of pearl
 Between the rose-leaf lips ; and rounded arms,
 And high white bosoms ! Such a Christian Girl
 The Prophet had forgotten for her charms

Amina and Khadidja ! So they loved,
 Body and soul and blood blended to one
 In burning passion ; and this passion proved
 Sorrow, as always. Majnûn was Said's son

Sheykh of the Gate, a hot Believer : she
 Sole child of Nicolas the Merchant. Never
 Dared they to meet if night's complicity
 Veiled not their trembling joys. Cruel ones ever

Watched them, incensed an Infidel's pale face
Should draw an Islamite with Sorcery ;
Incensed a Maid of Christ should yield her place
'Mid saints, a Muslim's Light o' Love to be.

But, through the jealous lattice of her bower
Sometimes he took the comfort of her eyes
And by the lute's low voice, or some dropped flower
Knew it was well with her, or otherwise.

For many waters shall not overflow,
Nor sharpened daggers daunt, nor angry faces
Affright, nor bitter doctrines check, nor woe
Change a true love, which in the holy places

Kneels nearest God. Yet, on our little star
Purged must it be by Sorrow's fellowship ;
And pale the visages of lovers are
With earthly griefs, when happy lip meets lip

In those Elysian meads where Death is dead.
So, on this parted pair, and on their city
Fell evil times ; the Plague, with footsteps red
Strode through the Land, slaying—*sans* pause or
pity—

Wife, husband, youth and age. A strong man stood
 One moment whole,—the next, there crept a thrill,
 Like the cold breath of Azrael, through his blood ;
 His eyes dimmed, breath came quick, body grew
 chill ;

Spasms rent his frame ; his poisoned flesh waxed white
 With blotches ; soon he sank in mortal pain ;
 Save where, after deep trance, Nature's kind might
 Flung the taint forth :—then quick he rose again.

Thus, on the self-same day, the Pestilence
 Smote these fair lovers, fated bitterly.
 Sighed Majnûn, 'mid his friends : “ Now go I hence,
 Never again my Lady's face to see !

“ Never again in this world ! Nay—and worse !
 Never in that beyond ; for she will be
 Where Christians are. Sing not another verse
 Of the Death-Sura ! Pray no prayers for me

“ To Allah ! If a Mussulman I die
 I shall gain Paradise, but not with her ;
 Christ ! take me where she goes ! Lord Isa, I
 Am Nazarene, as Mariam ! ” The stir

Of Mollahs rending robes, and curses bitter
 Of angry kin, his earnest accents drown ;
In a waste place the bearers of his litter
 Unburied flung that outcast's body down.

But while for Mariam's sake Majnûn foreswore
 Friends, Faith, and Paradise, his lady lay
Sick as to death—not knowing how they bore
 Her chosen forth—and all that piteous day

“ Majnûn ! ” she sighed, “ Oh, Majnûn, Pearl of Lovers !
 Death cometh, and we shall not meet again !
Nevermore, my Soul's Life ! the black grave covers
 Thy poor white Dove, whose feathers thou wert fain

“ Ofttimes to smooth and kiss ; and,—woe is me !—
 Whither I go there canst thou never come ;
For thou art of the Prophet's tribes ; and we
 Another people, with another home

“ Beyond this world. But, see now, Jesu tender !
 In all thy Father's Houses which would give
Rest to my soul ? what untold joy and splendour
 Could comfort Mariam, if she might not live

“ Forever, and forever, and forever
With Majnûn, be that Heaven, or be it Hell ?
If he may come where Thou art never—never—
Oh, Christ, my Lord ! then let me go to dwell

“ In what place for his peace Allah is keeping ! ”
And those around her bed chided the Maid,
Deeming she raved ; but dreamlike, as if sleeping,
Soft went she on, and this in whispers said :

“ Dear God, forgive ! if pardon for such sin
Hath been or can be ; still, I cannot take
A path beyond the tomb he walks not in,
A heaven he will not share. Therefore, I make

“ Sad choice, but settled :—letting go Thy love
Ah, gentle Christ ! lest I lose his, and sit
Amid Thine angels in the bliss above
Winning Thy blessed peace, and hating it

“ For lack of Majnûn. Is it Heaven’s command
None shall attain it, save at thy fair feet ?
Then he will not attain ! But I must stand
Beside Majnûn before the judgment-seat !

“ Oh, any Death save parting ! any doom
Except what sunders us ! Forgive, dread Lord !
Friends, is it evening ? round me swims the room !
Listen ! bury sad Mariam in the yard .

“ Where lie the Muslims of our quarter. Yea !
I bid ye list—I, who was Nazarene
All my true maiden years, die here to-day
A Mussulmani ! What his faith hath been

“ That same is mine ! hear me ! I testify
There is no God but Allah, and——” They smote
The little trembling lips, and drove that cry
Of tender heresy back in her throat,

Whose milky beauty throbbed—and hushed. And, then,
Scorning the renegade, they tore the Cross
From her cold breast, and bade the “ bearing-men ”
In that waste spot her shamēd body toss

Where Majnūn’s lay. So, thus it was beheld,
When the Moon rose upon the dismal plain,
The jackals, prowling ’mid the corpses, yelled
And fled, to see a dead man rise again ;

For Majnûn rose, healed by his trance ; and spied
Death-pale, yet breathing, moving, beautiful,
Mariam his lady, Mariam at his side ;
Mariam ! and life not finished !—Dutiful

With tenderest lips he touched her face, her head ;
Warmed with his breast her bosom ; chafed her feet
Full-softly, like two fair white birds, half-dead ;
And spake her name, murmuring such love-words sweet

That through the numbed sense to the drowsy heart
Stole their awakening music, and she lifted
Her silken lids,—and gazed—and with glad start
Flew to his neck. Oh, when were lovers gifted

With such a splendid moment ? For some space
Hung they together, feeding life with kisses,—
Each kiss a cordial—then they left that place
With faint rejoicing steps. And what long blisses

Were theirs for many years verse cannot tell.
Dear ! do you like my Jacynth for its story ?
Yet, where, at Death, those loving souls did dwell
Who knows ? God's many names may have one glory !

A.

“WHAT! A gold coin amid these jewelled treasures!

Why send me such a relic?”—so you say—

“Good to enhance some antiquary’s pleasures;

Stamped for dead people, in a buried day!”

True, now, but look a little! If one ponder
The legend of this piece, its gold may shine
With lustre leaving dull the gems of wonder
Which I did lay in those dear hands of thine.

An Aureus of the Roman Empire—see!

And, on its face, in plain imperial letters,
MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS—He
Was Master of our earth. Rome’s iron fetters,

Linked over lands and seas, were held by him,
The awful purple of the Cæsars wearing;
And triumph-crowned! for, mark, along the rim
DEVICTIS MARCOMANNIS. He was bearing

That year Pannonian laurels (one—six—eight—

In era of our Lord). Gaze on the face

Pictured from one most noble, wise, and great,

First of his age, and foremost of his race.

Consider ! Pious souls have been, but he

Feared Heaven, worshipped himself! And just have
been ;

But he, higher than Law, bowed down to be

Law's officer ! Well-taught, in books deep-seen,

Daily he sate at school ! Master of war,

Bloodshed he stayed ; pitied his vanquished foes ;

Pardoned his haters ! Set far off, a Star

Of sovereignty, he ranked himself with those

Born to serve Man ! Enriched with all the East,

With all the West ; Lord of the wealth of Rome ;

He lay on earth, drank from the stream, made feast

Of fruits and roots ! Yet, to rear porch and dome

Stately at Athens, splendid on old Nile ;

To dower learning, scatter truth, spread good ;

To help the thoughts which help mankind meanwhile

For those he poured his sesterces in flood !

Majestic, melancholy, lofty, mild ;
Holier than saints, than sages more enrapt ;
One hour listening to Fronto like a child,
The next, in royal paludamentum lapped

Governing the world ! Ah, measure what a man !
White in an age dark and unbeautiful :
Highest, yet humblest : since the kings began
No heart so kingly, large, and dutiful.

Regard him ! does my Emperor pleasure you ?
Being but a man I only know that here—
If we shall set apart some three or two—
The flower of humankind blooms bright and dear.

This is the best we are ! “ Verissimus ”
Hadrian did style him ! When the Senate named
Marcus sole Cæsar, spake he : “ Seat with us
My Lucius Verus also ; I were blamed

“ Keeping no place upon his Father’s throne
Whose Father loved me.” When the eagles fled
Before the Marcomanni, he alone—
Loathing red war—the reeling legions led

To victory. At his life—too pure to please—
Avidius Cassius aimed, joining foul hands
With Cæsar's beauteous Empress: foiling these
The loving peoples and the loyal bands

Slew that arch rebel, sent his severed head
A tribute to the Court; but Marcus sighed
Seeing the bloody gift; and, musing, said:
“ Happier I were to pardon ! ” when he spied

The accusing list, setting in deadly row
Names of the plotters, royally he rends
The scroll to shreds; quoth he: “ Let me not know
Mine enemies, till I have made them friends ! ”

And as he lived, so died he; grand and meek,
Maintaining Antonine's sublimity,
Who, for last watchword, hardly strong to speak,
Gave the centurion “ Equanimity.”

Hear Marcus teach: “ If thou with Gods would'st dwell,
Keep a contented mind; follow that guide
Whom Jove hath lodged within thy breast to tell
His will, and lead thee to the better side.

“ Either the Universe is Chaos, Chance ;
Or else the Universe is Order, Law ;
If that—die ! and let pass the drunken dance ;
If this—live and rejoice, in Love and Awe.

“ Offer that inner rule of Heaven’s high Lord
A strong soul ripened by the life below ;
A soldier at his post waiting the word ;
A heart too grateful to be loath to go.

“ All which befitteth thee, befitteth me,
Thou Scheme of God ! What to thee cometh right
To me comes right : if life or death it be
So let it be ; good is it in my sight,

“ If good in Jove’s ! Oh Mother Earth ! I take
My rest with thee, right gladly lying down ;
What ! shall the poets praise Athens, and make
Songs to the City of the Violet Crown,

“ And none praise Jove’s great City, where we spent
Our span of years ? ’Twas sweet therein to dwell ;
Yet being bid to quit, go well content !
No tyrant orders ; no harsh laws compel !

“ Who opened thee the City-gates, now closes ;
 Who named thee freeman, sends thee off the wall :
 Depart obedient ! Is there one supposes
 The Ruler of the Rulers knows not all ?

“ Depart submissive, glad ! Die unrepining !
 There is a Greater guardeth thee than thou,
 Dearer than to thyself thy life's combining
 Was to the Cosmos ; death is better now ! ”

Was he not perfect ? Will you scorn to wear
 His aureus 'mid the gems ? Yet lurking wonders
 Perplex male minds, studying your strange sex, Dear !
 For gazing on his countenance one ponders

That grudge Faustina bore him. She—his wife—
 Sharing the Purple, Lady of his glory,
 Stained the imperial honours of his life
 With shameful passions. Nay, I spare the story !

They knew it—to the lowest Roman slave :
 Living he would not punish ; dead he made her
 Obsequies splendid ; stateliest mourning gave,
 And in a glorious milk-white tomb he laid her.

Ah, you *will* wear ! You sternly judge Faustine !

Yet one point more :—his sword he whetted sharp,
To smite the followers of the Nazarene ;

Hated the Christians, and burned Polycarp—

For Rome's great sake ! You lay it by again !

But, this—at best—we are ; doubtless, 'tis pity
He could not love our gentle Christ, nor win

One woman's breast. Still, when he died, his City

Voted him God ; and every citizen

Bought bronzes of him, built them shrines at home ;
Made him their household Lar, their Man of men ;

Faustina's fool, Christ's foe, crowned saint of Rome !

I.

SEE now ! an Ivory Casket for your treasures,
Cut from a tusk some lord of Elephants
Yielded, besieged amid his forest-pleasures,
By circling foes. The creamy surface vaunts

Turquoise, in blue stars set, with Iolite,
That violet-tinted gem which somehowle hides
In Indian hills. Azures and purples bright
Play daintily across its sparkling sides !

And, look ! the Casket bears so rich a labour
Of chiselled work, and stones, it may have been
By day the white delight, at night the neighbour
Of the soft slumbers of some Hindoo Queen.

It may be wrought—who knows ? of ivory
Taken from tooth of Raja Megh Koomar.
A famous Prince of Magadha was he,
Gentle in peace, and generous in war,

An elephant, in his last life but one,—

'Tis the Jain story—for a woodland-fire
Brake forth, consuming trees and grass. Undone
The forest-creatures died. Wider and higher

The red tongues raged; whereat this kingly beast
Betook himself for flight; when—from the reeds—
A striped bush-mouse, of all things last and least,
Leaped forth, and ran between his feet, and pleads

To Raja Megh: “Ahi! great Prince! permit
I take asylum from this dreadful flame
Betwixt thy mighty legs!” Megh looked on it:
“Small art thou!” quotha “yet is life the same

“Brother! for thee as me. Stay where thou art!
I never spurned aught living, nor shall now;
Sit close and fear not; I will not depart!”
Therewith he faced the fire, wielding a bough

Of thick-leaved Sal, to beat the heat away;
Which curled and hissed, and scorched, blistering one
limb
And all his length of trunk, so sore—they say—
Megh died ere night; but saved the mouse. And him

In the next life the just Gods made a king.

Mark, too, your casket's milky sides, how full
Of imagery ! Here's a subtle thing—

A banyan-tree, whereat, with steadfast pull,

Toils a tusked Elephant to lay it low ;

And 'mongst the dropping branches two which bear
A long-tailed clinging monkey, feeding so
On the red figs, he has no eyes to fear

Those two rats, one so black, and one so white,

Which nibble at the branches : but beneath
A pit gapes, where you see the lurid light
Of snake-shapes twisting, and grim signs of death.

Shall I interpret ? Life's the banyan tree ;

Which Death, the elephant, in dust would lay ;
And the poor foolish ape is Man ; and, see !
This black rat is the Night, the white the Day,

Which ever gnaw, in turn, at life's thin branches

Whereto man clings ; till, blind with sense and sin,
Fat with world's figs, down rolls he to those trenches
Dug by Death's feet, with serpents hid therein.

But here's a fairer legend carved ! A balance
Wherein they weigh a Prince against a Dove ;
An Eagle looking on ! the Eagle's talons
Bloody ; the Prince's face alight with love !

Shall I interpret ? Raja Sagaras
This is ; for kindly heart of large renown :
One morning, when in full Divan he was,
A white dove through the lattice fluttered down,

Her silver plumage pink with blood, and ruffled ;
And, following on fierce wings, an Eagle. She,
Nigh dead with fear, her fainting pinions muffled
In the King's breast-cloth, seeking sanctuary

Close to his heart. Then screamed the cruel bird
“ Give me my prey, just King ! ” But Sagaras
Fondling the Dove, said : “ Never is it heard
A prince repelled his suppliant ! ” Hot as brass

Glared the great Eagle's eyes while it did cry :
“ I conjure thee by justice ! She is mine !
We drove her from the wood, my mate and I,
We hunger ! give the pigeon's meat—or thine ! ”

"Thou hast thy right," answered the King, "but I
 The right to ransom ; bring me scales, and weigh
 My flesh against this dove's." So, fearlessly
 Drew he a sword, and lopped his hand away.

The bird weighed more ! More of his bleeding flesh

Shore that kind Prince ; yet still mounted the scale !

Add what he would, heaping fresh gifts on fresh,

The Dove proves aye the heavier ! To prevail

Into the balance then himself he laid,

Pallid and fainting, "for" quoth he, "a King
 Were liever dead, and eagle's food, than made

A shame through ages, doing such a thing !"

Thereat—the legend runs—the Drums of Heaven

Beat tender music, and strange blossoms rained
 Out of the sky ; and from those oceans seven,

Which ring our Earth, came Spirits of Bliss, constrained

By such sweet deed to show themselves, and praise

My Raja carven here : also the Dove

Shook off her feathers, and great Uma was

Shiva's fair Queen, Mother of Light and Love !

And the black Eagle into Dharma turned
 The God of Justice ; and the Raja's hurts
 Were healed ; and all the hearts of people burned
 With worship ! So had Mercy her deserts. . . .

Another sculptured side ! A mango-tree
 Laden with fruit : one who a hatchet bears
 Of black hue ; one breaking a branchlet,—see !—
 Blue-visaged ; while a third, red-featured, tears

Raw mangoes down : a fourth sits in the leaves
 Eating the ripest ;—he is yellow : five
 Is this light-tinted Rishi who receives
 The fallen fruit, and passes. Shall I give

Interpretation ? 'Tis a parable
 Of mortals using life and living things ;
 A Hindoo Artist's fable ; he would tell
 By colours who is wise, and which man brings

Shame on himself and sorrow to his kind.
 Black, with vile selfishness, is he that goes,
 To hew the tree for mangoes to his mind ;
 Conquerors and criminals are such as those.

And not quite black—but blue—this egotist
Who breaks a branch to reach some rosy fruit ;
Such be seducers, profligates ; I wist
Small thought have they of the sad withered shoot !

A little fairer-tinted—red—is he
Who will not harm branchlet or trunk ; yet mounts
Into the thickest harvest of the tree,
Plucking what comes : and this man—yellow—
counts

Better complexion still, who only takes
The ripe fruits, made for eating. But the best
Behold him in that patient saint who makes
The fallen ones suffice ! His hues attest—

(White or wheat-coloured)—that the carver meant him
The sweet contented soul who seeks small share
Gratefully, and goes by : since Heaven hath sent him
To serve and work, not feast and wanton here.

Ah ! the last panel ! Asia's secrets those,
Cut with proud patience on the creamy tooth !
Here you divine a form serene which shows
Smooth perfect limbs, and glorious grace of youth ;

One side all male, and one all tender woman ;
The right-half God, but Goddess all the left ;
With braided hair, full bosoms, beauties human :
Over its head a bat, and water-eft ;

Beneath, a climbing plant shoots three-fold leaves,
With pale blue flowerets. "Tis our Hindoo's way
To teach how " Maya's " subtle art deceives
By double sexes, forms of things which play

In various disguise of " He " and " She,"
Of serpent, beast, and bird ; of moving lives,
And lives not moving. " All is phantasy !
There is one Being only !" this he strives

To carve upon the casket, showing us
Ardhanarishwara—female and male—
Who hath both natures ; and the bat proves thus
That mouse and bird unite, as skin and scale

Meet in the eft. The plant with triple leaf
Ah, that's a marvel of our Indian jungle !
Dull botanists—who flout the sweet belief
That Dryads live, and with harsh Latin bungle

Tree use and beauty—those have never told
 Half ardently *Desmodium's* miracle !
If you should watch its buds of blue and gold
 And light green leaflets, you would see them tell

Minute by minute the day-watches all,
 And all the hours of night, ever alert ;
One petiole rising while the others fall ;
 A herb which lives and moves, and doth assert

A soul of sentience overpassing bounds
 Set for the leafy world. Have we not seen
In sunny Singhalesian garden-grounds,
 The grasses shrink where our quick steps had been,

Modest and timid as a maid that blushes,
 But is not to be touched ? Flowers, too, there be
Which sparkle flame in opening ; one that flushes
 Scarlet, at sunset only. Briefly, he—

Our Hindoo—thinks men, creatures, trees all one ;
 He calls *Desmodium* a mystic name.
But close the Casket's lid ! I were undone
 If this should weary you. Now shines the flame

D.

Of Dawn-stone ! rare Sandastros !—*piedra pura* !

My servants bring this gem from Yucatan :
See ! in one light 'tis ruddy like Aurora,
And in another pallid gold. . . . A man

Died, save for this ! Ah, but so long ago
You need not sigh ; yet, if you ask the story,
Believe that every jewel here below
Hath some Familiar dwelling in its glory.

How shall we question now ? Mark, on the gem,
Strange signs incised—Mexican symbols graved
By Montezuma's priests—the speech of them
Was Aztec : let the stone be three times waved,

And say, in ancient Aztec phrase, demurely,
“ Sprite of the Jewel, speak ! whence springest thou ?
What is thy tale ?”—Oh, it will answer, surely !—
Behold ! a little brown-eyed damsel now

Appears, in feathered garb, and plaited tresses,

As the soft Indians used when Cortez came !

Listen ! with low obeisance she addresses

The mistress of the stone :

“ My wearer’s name

“ Was young Ayâni—daughter to the priest

Of Tezicatlepotchli, God of day ;

In Anahuac, at the yearly feast,

The fairest captive youth they chose, to lay

“ Bound, on the Blood-Rock of the Pointed Hill—

The Teo-calli—for thus was our Law :—

The people beat the snake-drums, and blew shrill

Their pipes of bone, whilst the Chief-Priest did draw

“ His knife of splintered *itztli* through the flesh

Cutting from East to West ; and so did take

The throbbing heart away, and burn it fresh

Upon the Sun-God’s altar. But to make

“ Costlier that noble offering to Heaven,

For twelve glad moons before the day of doom

Honour and love to the fair boy were given ;

They built him in the Golden House a room

“ Like a God’s chamber, gay with many a thing
 Of grace and ornament ; and richly laid
With cougar-skins and mats : where slaves did bring—
 Each eve—baskets of grapes, and cakes new-made,

“ With cactus-wine and honey, spreading soft
 His bed for love and sleep ; since always there
Tender ones waited, waving high aloft
 Fans of pied feathers, that the fragrant air

“ Might kiss his brow and cheeks. And lovely gardens
 Opened beyond the chamber, where there grew
All the fair fruits our southern summer hardens,
 Stately great trees, and blooms of every hue.

“ And there would lie Ayâni, with her lover,
 For she was noblest, and our law was this ;
That—till those twelve good moons were past and over—
 The sweetest lips, the proudest breasts were his,

“ The best the Land could give. Mine was the jewel
 Her throat bore when its dusky beauty spread—
In those swift hours of joy, tender and cruel,—
 A pillow for his happy, fated head.

“ There would Ayâni lie, making delight
For him whose heart must smoke upon the stone :
Girding with buds of river-roses white
That breast the flint must open, flesh and bone !

“ And she would sing our ancient temple-song—
Sad and bewitching—saying Life is this :
A dream whose vague delight lasts never long ;
A swift night swallowing up brief day of bliss :

“ Or, with low kissing-cry would call away
The humming birds, that quivered at the blooms,
To nestle in her neck and hands, and lay
The honey-quest aside, trilling their plumes

“ To please the pair. This glory of my gem,
Which trembles with the colours of the Morn,
Hath no such radiance as the tints of them—
Winged jewels of their Garden. One was borne

“ On pinions of pale green, melting to black
By bronze and russet passages, its head
Alight with blazing ruby, and its back
Afire with flashing sapphire. Some word said

“Would bring that tiny splendour, glittering,
Forth from the trumpet-blossom’s perfumed cup,
To brood amid Ayâni’s hair, each wing
Brilliantly spread, and the crest lifted up

“A tongue of flickering flame. And one bird—dressed
All silver and soft blues, with tufts of silk
At each white flank—would fly fond to her breast,
And hang between its hills of tinted milk,

“Darting in play his bill’s black slender curve,
Now this side and now that, as if what grew
On those hill-tops were buds enough to serve
For flowers and nectar. And another flew—

“Whene’er Ayâni summoned—to her lip,
A little starry speck whence keen beams gleamed
Of gold and purple, in bright fellowship
With dark green gorget, and a neck that seemed

“Plumaged from rainbows. ‘Feed ! my Rose-ball, Feed !’
The girl would murmur, and the bird would poise
His bright enamelled breast, and blossomy head
Before her open laughing mouth, with noise

“ Of whirring wings ; plunging the amethyst
 Of his small frontlet, and his gold-mailed neck
 Into that rosy hollow—sweet, I wist,
 As any rose’s heart—and feign to suck

“ Ayâni’s honey ! Yet another minion—
 Corseletted all in crimson scales, and thighed
 With topaz and with turquoise ; either pinion
 Splashed with red gilding, and each shoulder dyed

“ Blood-purple—he would perch upon her ear,
 Sit in its pearly cavern ; you had thought
 A live fire-opal from Papantla there
 Burgeoned and blazed ! With other cries she brought

“ Other fair woodland creatures ; lizards plated
 With grey and amber armour ; mottled snakes
 Pink-mouthed and sheeny ; great-eyed musk-deer, sated.
 With browsing flowers. The jacamar, who makes

“ A nest in reeds, left its red eggs to go
 Where the girl called ; the grunting peccaries
 Gazed at her through the aloes ; white as snow
 The egrets clustered round her. He that lies

“ Couched in the canes, a terror of the wood,—
The clouded jaguar,—when Ayâni sung
Dropped the red fragments from his jaws, and stood
At the brake’s edge to hear. Slowly unclung

“ His coils the anaconda from the limb
Where he lay knotted ; and, all spell-bound, drew
His massive freckled folds through twilights dim
Of the deep forest, hastening near to view

“ That soft-voiced woman. All along the leaves
Of the Royal lilies, where their lush growth lies
Crowning with green and red the river-waves,
The plovers raced to greet her. Butterflies—

“ Azure and silver-dappled, black and gold—
Drew towards her as they draw to some bright blossom ;
Ah, for a jewelled queen ! ’twas to behold
Ayâni with the sun-birds in her bosom,

“ And those gay fluttering fulgencies alight
On her dark hair ! She had such charm of love
’Twould stay the nursing toucan in her flight,
And fetch the hungry condor from above

“To circle nigh : the clavin—singing sweet
 Beyond all warblers—and four-handed folk,
 Bonnetted, furred, hook-tailed, all to her feet
 Crept wooingly, and took the gentle yoke,

“In joy and peace, of young Ayâni. So
 Flew the delicious days, till that day came,
 The last of love. ‘Honey of life ! Dost know ?’
 The captive said : ‘to-morrow morn the flame

“‘Will eat the heart which so adores thee ?’ ‘Dear !’
 The Girl made answer : ‘I was set to soothe
 Thy dying times, not love thee : yet, this year
 Hath made our spirits one ! Ayâni’s youth,

“‘Ayâni’s mirth and comfort go with thee !
 Alas, the hateful stone ! the cruel knife !
 The awful God ! But, if this offering be,
 How shall I live alone, who am thy wife,

“‘Great with thy child ? Look now ! ’tis dark ! array
 thee
 In my bark mantle ; bind around thy waist
 My belt of feathers. Fly ! If any stay thee,
 This jewel is the sign ! Speak nothing ! Haste !

“ ‘ Show them my stone, and pass ! Hide in the wood !
Less bitter are the beasts than men who pray !’
Vainly he clung and kissed ; vainly withheld,
She thrust him forth to save him. When ’twas day

“ They found him fled. Then, all the angry folk
Cried death against Ayâni, who had cheated
Great Tezicatlepotchli of his smoke
Of sacrifice. But she their spite defeated ;

“ For, lying bound, she summoned from the brake,—
By some low word her woodland creatures knew,
And understood—a slender ribboned snake
Which coiled, obedient, round her wrist, and drew

“ One ruby blood-drop, with right-loving tooth.—
So did Ayâni win escape. My gem
Hath this for story !”—

If thy tale be truth,
Sprite of the Stone ! who would not pity them ?

E.

EUCLASE ! and Essonite ! the last and rarest—
With Evening Emerald, surnamed Peridot !
Now will fair ladies envy you, my Dearest,
For this full Jewel-Casket you have got !

Euclase ! Not many an eye hath viewed the wonder !
A secret of Brazilian streams, which bring
Once in twelve moons to sight—the schist-drifts under—
The tender glories of this subtle thing.

Sometimes a honey-yellow, sometimes green
As leaves against the light, then shot with flakes
Of pale sea-blue, but all three Colours seen
As Nature wills ; for the keen crystal takes

No touch of wheel. Its fragile charms forbid
A goldsmith's labour ; when the Maker made
Euclase, “ Let there lie, in My Rivers hid,
“ One perfect thing man shall not mar ! ” He said.

And Essonite—styled “stone of Cinnamon”—

The garnet Greek and Tuscan used to grave
With beauty, best and sweetest under sun,

Faces of Gods, and Heroes great and brave !

Gold, fired with crimson beams, so glows this gem,

Cut to a beetle’s shape, the sacred Scarab
Of dead Egyptians. Note the signs of them

Quaint hieroglyphs ! Some CÆthiop or Arab

Wore this in life and death ; and no man knows

His name or deeds ! But your name men shall know
Reading these jewelled letters which compose

Its gentle music ; for my verse will go—

Glad with the light of Love and you—to days

When better poets live, and Life,—made strong
By sheaves of our sad sowing-time—shall praise

Ladies we sang, and graces of our song.

Last comes my Peridot, the stone of Eve,

Tinted as evening skies are when their blue
Blends with the gold and grey, till we believe
Asphodel valleys open, and ’tis true

That blessed spirits tread green meads in Heaven.

This is the “precious olivine” men trace
In cliffs of Nile ; and sometimes it is riven
From those black massy bolts hurled out of space

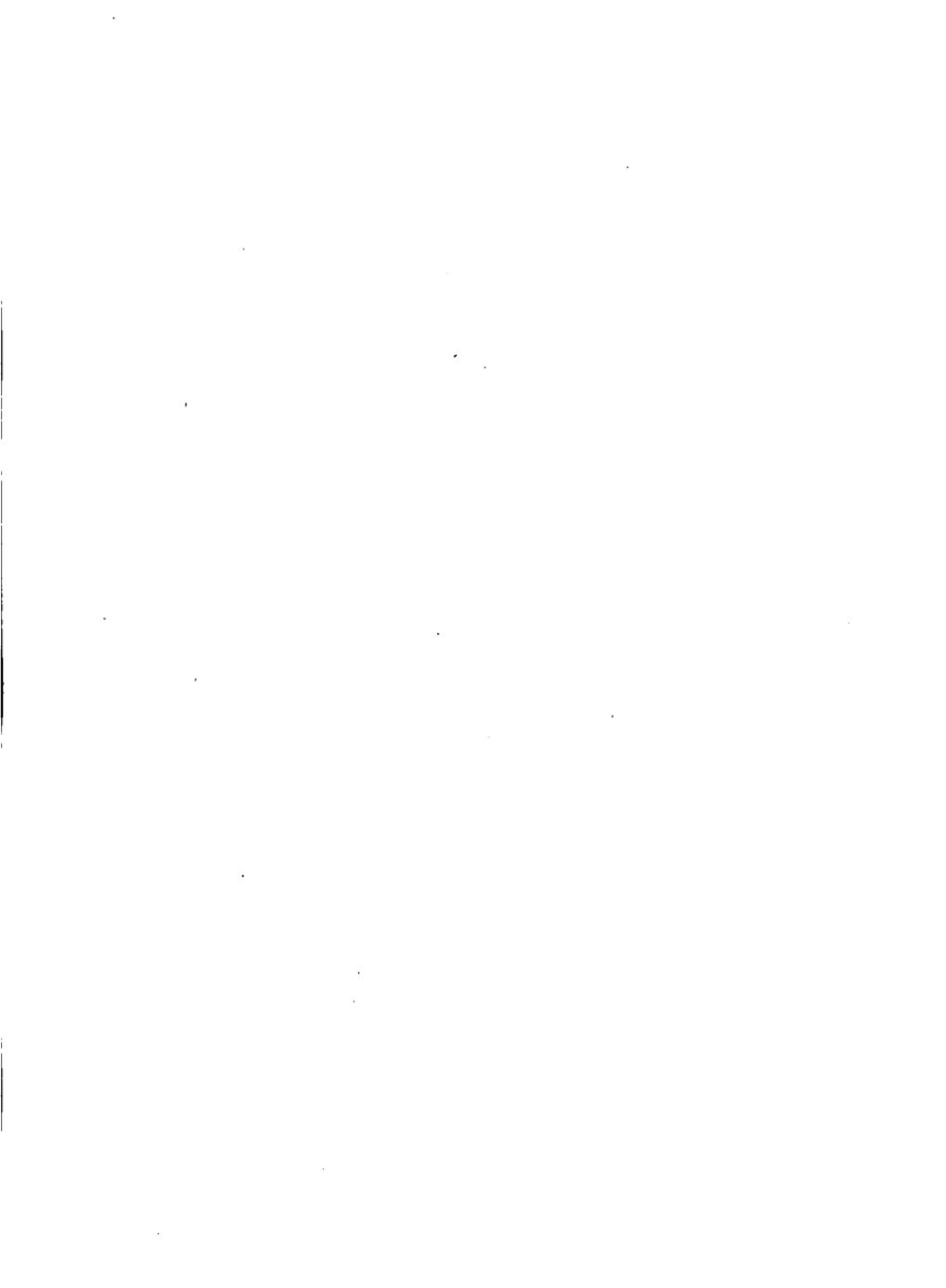
Upon our Earth. Whence come they ? Birds of wonder,

Flying on fearful pinions from the Vast
Wherein all swims ; lighting, mid flame and thunder,
In the scorched fields. The Indian blacksmith’s blast

Forges a sword therefrom of splendid water :

I pluck a jewel, Dear ! for Love can bring
Gladness from grief, high hope from death and slaughter,
Light out of Darkness, good from everything !





October.

(Written in description of a picture painted by her.)

A BOLD brunette she is, radiant with mirth,
Who comes a-tripping over corn-fields cropped ;
Fruits and blown roses from her full arms dropped,
Carpet her feet along the gladdened earth.

And on her brow glitters a careless crown
Of bronzèd oak, and apple-leaves, and vine ;
And russet-nuts and country berries twine
About her gleaming shoulders and loose gown.

Like grapes at vintage, where the ripe wine glows,
Glows so her sweet cheek, summer-touched but fair ;
And, like grape-tendrils, all her wealth of hair,
Gold on a ground of brown, nods as she goes :

Grapes too, a-spirit, her brimming fingers bear
A dainty wine-press, pouring wet and warm
The crimson river over wrist and arm,
And on her lips—adding no crimson there !

Ah! splendid autumn hours—fly not so fast!

Let this rich Lady long with us delay;

The sunset makes the sun so wished-for—stay!

Of three sweet months the loveliest and the last!

But after laughter ever follows grief,

And Pleasure's sunshine brings its shadow Pain;

Even now begins the dreary time again,

The first dull patter of the first dead leaf.

Dedication of a Volume of Translations.

FLOWERS from Greek gardens, Fannie! old turned new,

Doric, Æolic, Attic gathered here:

You made the pleasant sunshine where they grew;

Such as the growth is, have the blossoms, Dear!

To "Stella."

SWEET Planet! strangely seen, suddenly loved
At the first eye-glance of our midnight meeting!
I look back on the ways whereby I moved
To this fair fate, my lonely life completing:
I did not seek you, Dear! no vision tender
Bade me expect you by my rayless road!
There was no dreamy dawning of the splendour
Your white light shed! no morning-grey that showed
Where my Star waited under life's horizon!—
Ah, far, pure, silvery Star! set not again!
Better no lamp to fix the sailor's eyes on,
Than one brief beam cast on the cold dark main!

A Duet.

HE:

“ AH!—if you knew! if I dared to discover
 Half that my heart feels to-day:
If there were words for so faithful a lover,
 Fair enough, fond enough,—say!
Would you be vexed at my passionate pleading?
 Would you believe it was true?
How would the beautiful eyes look,—conceding?
 Rebuking? Oh, Sweet! if you knew!”

SHE:

“ How can I know, when a glance of relenting
 Stays the love-whisper, half-said?
How can I know when,—while I am consenting,
 ‘ No’—is the sentence you dread?
Sometimes I think I should never believe you,
 Sometimes—my thought—is not so;
If you speak nothing, no answer can grieve you,
 Only then—what can I know?”

On a Cyclamen,

(Plucked at Cana of Galilee, and presented to her, as a Bride).

ONLY a Flower! but, then, it grew
 On the green mountains which en-ring
Kana-el-Jelil; looking to
 The village, and the little Spring!

The Love which did those bridals bless
 Ever and ever on these shine!
Make happier all your happiness,
 And turn its water into wine!

In Happy Days.

THE harvest-moon stands on the sea,
 Her shining rim's a drip;
She gilds the sheaves on many a lea,
 The sails on many a ship;
Glitter, sweet Queen, upon the spray,
 And glimmer on the heather;
Right fair thy ray to show the way
 Where lovers walk together.

The red wheat rustles, and the vines
 Are purple to the root,
And true love, waiting patient, wins
 Its blessed time of fruit.
Lamp of all lovers, Lady-moon,
 Light these glad lips together
Which reap alone a harvest sown
 Long ere September weather.

To a Sleeping Lady.

DARLING ! as you lie there sleeping, with the holy angels
keeping

Watch and ward around your pillow, shading it with
wings of gold—

Sentinels whose happy duty is to guard your grace and
beauty—

While you lie there dreaming, seeming all your sweet
self, calm and cold,

Who would think that the true treasure of that casket,
beyond measure

Rich, and fair, and finished, is not where the quiet cas-
ket lies ?

That they see the palace-portal set ajar, and the Immortal
Gone forth from its rosy gateway, locking satin lids on
eyes ?

Yet so it is. Sweetest woman ! and what's there is but the
human

Robe and raiment which your spirit wears, to walk with
all the rest,

Regal raiment ! Ah ! the silky wavelets of that hair ! the
milky

Whiteness of the brow, the neck, the small hands folded
o'er the breast !

As a Queen's grace seems to linger in the pearl-strings
which her finger

Loosened—so thy soul leaves glory on that sleeping form
of thine;

But the slender, fair, still body is not that which most I
worship,

And your soul—my Pride! my Bride!—is here, and
talking low with mine.

All because, at such an hour, Love hath so much charm
and power,

Life hath so much deeper knowledge of its march and
mystery,

That so soon as I invite it—coy no longer, but delighted,
Forth thy quick and gentle spirit comes for fellowship
with me.

And, beside my spirit sitting, thoughts with deep thoughts
interknitting,

Speaking plainly in a silence clearer, dearer far than
speech,

Mine grows all thine inmost being; and I see thee more
than seeing—

I and thou as one together; blended, ended, each in
each.

“Students’ Day” in the National Gallery.

(Written when she was copying the Madonna of Perugino. May 1868.)

OUT of all the hundred fair Madonnas
Seen in many a rich and distant city—
Sweet Madonnas, with the mother’s bosoms ;
Sad Madonnas, with the eyes of anguish ;
Rapt Madonnas, caught in clouds to heaven—
(Clouds of golden, glad, adoring Angels—)
She of Florence, in the chair—so perfect !
She that was the “ Grand Duke’s ” wealth and glory,
She that makes the picture “ of the Goldfinch,”
Ghirlandajo’s, with the cloak and jewels,
Guido’s Queen, whom men and angels worship ;
Della Robbia’s best ; and that sweet “ Perla ”—
Seville’s bright boast—Mary of Murillo,
(Painted—so they vow—“ with milk and roses ”)
Guido Reni’s Quadro at Bologna,
Munich’s masterpiece, grim Durer’s Goddess ;
Yes ! and thy brave work—Beltraffio mio !—

Many as the lessons are I owe them,
Thanks and wonder; worship; grateful memories,
Oftenest I shall think of Perugino's.

Do you know it? Either side a triptych
Stands an armed Archangel—as to guard her—
Glorious—with great wings, and shining armour:
In the middle panel, pure and tender,
Clasping close her hands, with adoration,
(All the Mother's love—the Mortal's worship—
In their yearning, in their reverence, painted)
Gazes Mary on the Child. A seraph
Holds Him, smiling, at her knees; and, smiling,
Looks she down, with spirit humbly-happy,
Full—to heart's brim—of the Peace of Heaven.
Reverence mingles with the Mother's passion,
But no touch of sadness, or of doubting.
Far away a river runneth seaward,
(Little now—like Truth—like Truth, to widen)
Leads the light across a blue dim country,
Under peaks—by forests—to the ocean:
Soft and warm, a pearly sky broods over
Where three Winged-Ones, at the Father's footstool,
Sing the “peace and good-will” song to mortals.

If you ask me why that Perugino
Of the rest can never be forgottén,
Let this serve: I learned a lesson by it,
Watching one whose light and faithful fingers—
Following touch by touch her lovely labour—
Caught the Master's trick, and made him modern.
While she bent above her new Madonna,
Laid the lucid smalts, and touched the crimsonos,
Swept the shadows under the gilt tresses,
Smoothed the sinless brows, and drooped the eyelids,—
What the Master did, so also doing,—
I bethought me "True and good the toil is!
Noble thus to double gifts of beauty!
Yet, alas! this 'peace and good-will' anthem,—
If the dear Madonna knew what ages—
Slowly following ages—would creep o'er us,
And those words be still as wind that passes,
Breathing fragrance from a land we know not,
Sighing music to a tune we catch not,
Stirring hearts, as leaves, i' the night, a little
Shake, and sleep again, and wait for sunlight,
(Sweet, glad sunlight! oh, so long a-coming!)
Would she smile so? I had painted rather—
(While she listened to those singing Angels,)

Mary, with a sword-blade in her bosom,
(Sword that was to pierce her heart, of all hearts !)
I had shown her with deep eyes of trouble,
Half afraid to credit that Evangel ;
I had limned her ‘ pondering all those sayings,’
All our later agonies foreseeing,
After all our years have heard ‘ the tidings.’ ”

But the Artist, painting bold and largely,
Washing soft and clear the broadening colours ;
With a liberal brush, at skilful working,
Linking lights and shadows on the visage,
Dropped by hazard there one drop of water !
“ Lo, a tear ! ” I thought ; “ that teaches Pietro !
That is wiser than the Master’s wisdom !
Now the picture’s meaning will be perfect !
For she could not be so calm—Christ’s Mother—
Could she ? even though Archangels kept her !
Could she ? even though those sang in Heaven !
Knowing how her world would roll beyond them,
Twenty centuries past this sacred moment,
Out of sound of this angelic singing ;
Loaded with the wrongs Christ’s justice rights not,
Reddened with the blood Christ’s teachings staunch not,

Reeking with the tears Christ's pity stays not :
Let the tear shine there ! it suits the story !
Tear and smile go wondrous well together !
Seeing that this song was sung by Angels ;
Seeing that the foolish world gainsays it.
That one lustrous drop completes the picture !
You forgot it ! Peter of Perugia ! "

Ah ! I did not know an Artist's wisdom !
I had still to learn my deepest lesson :
She I watched, with better thought inspired,
Took some tender colour in her pencil,
(Faint dawn-colour,—blush of rose—I marked not !)
Touched the tear, and melted it to brightness,
Spread it in a heavenly smile all over,
Magically made it turn to service ;
Till that tear, charged with its rosy tintings,
Deepened the first sweet smile, and left it lovelier,—
Like the Master's work, complete, sufficient !

Then I thought : " Pietro's wise Madonna
Was too wise to weep at little sorrows !
Christ, and She, and Heaven, and all the angels
Last ;—'tis sin, and grief, alone which passes !

Roses grow of dew, and smiles from weeping !
Sweetest smile is made of saddest tear-drop !
She hath not forgotten we shall suffer !
In her heart that sword—to the heft—is planted,
But, beyond the years, she sees Time over ;
Past the Calvary she counts ‘the mansions.’
Dear Madonna!—wise to be so happy !
Should you weep, because we have not listened ?
We shall listen ! and His mother knows it !”

This is why—of many rare Madonnas,—
Most of all I think on Perugino’s ;
I who know so many more and love them !
This is why I thank my gentle artist,
She who taught me that, a student’s wisdom !

Memories.

THEY never will read it, in this sad face,
How I came, at last, to my Lady's grace;
If they saw my heart they would hardly know
It lies so close, and it lurks so low:

So womanly went she, so gladsome and good,
The charm of her never was understood;
Till I—for whom was the secret fine—
Found her, and wooed her, and won her for mine.

She knows—she only! how slow and sweet
My love grew up from the palms of her feet,
From low at her foot to high on her brow,
From Dear—and Dearer—to Dearest—till now.

There is none of her—none—that I may not love,
Beauty of earth, or bright spirit above;
But only the Angels—and Fannie—know
Why, living and dying—I love her so.

In Absence.

(Written in 1872, and found among her papers.)

AT home I sit without you,
And find that “home” is you ;
Homeless at home, to miss you makes
The soft words sound untrue :
Not twice ten leagues divide us—
A thousand they appear,
Because to part heart’s beat from heart
Leaves entry-gate for fear.

Are you safe—well—and sleeping ?
You cannot answer me !
Why should the faint electric pulse
Throb under all the Sea,
And mighty Love, past range of speech,
Be dumb and deaf and blind
Beyond such space as takes your face
Too far for eyes to find ?

Dearest ! I touch, with trembling,
A cup of fate and fear !
Your chair, your book, the rose you wore,
Your hat, your gloves are here,
But not what gave them charm ! Lone seems
This room, and lone above
Will be—I know—when there I go
The nest of my white Dove.

I touch a cup of sadness ;
Tasting the topmost drop
Of what—if God should bid me drink—
Would make all singing stop :
Suppose that never more you came !
As one who sets wild lips
To dark drugged bowl, so my rash soul
At that dread fancy sips ;

And, then, recoils in fancy
As lips draw back in haste
From the first deadly flavouring
Of the sharp poison-taste.
Ah ! Heaven be praised ! To-morrow, you
Will sit in the old chair,

The leagues will change to kissing-range,
And I shall stroke your hair.

Yet, since it might be, Darling !
And—being—I should need
To say a hundred hurried things
Of which Death takes no heed,
I write one word of all those words
As true as truth can be,
For you to read, come back with speed
Bright and alive to me :

And this it is :—I love you
For troubles, cares, and fears ;
For faults and foolish angers,
And whims and tiffs and tears,
For sulks not less than sweetness, Sweet !
For faith no more than doubt ;
Not counting nought those hours which brought
Fondness by fallings-out.

Yes ! and if—Fannie !—never
You sate by me again,
And this feigned thought of sadness
Were settled lasting pain,

I should not say, "would I had shewn
A nobler constancy!"
As you in Heaven were all forgiven
So I on Earth must be.

If you were dead I should not
Wish I had loved you more,
Because heart-full is full—what failed
Was body, when souls soar:
But I should wish forgotten
Rash acts and thoughts unkind
Which chanced erewhile—that I might smile
Your soft faults out of mind.

Well! one small word tells all things!
"Love," "Love" concludes, begins,
Defines—explains—exemplifies,
Conciliates, comforts, wins;
Assoils the sins we could not 'scape,
Sets right our wrong, and ends
All grief of this with one soul-kiss
Which links us lasting friends.

Then hear it, Wife!—This midnight
My spirit speaks to you

That word of changless meaning
By solitude made true:
For, Sweet! if planets parted us
Instead of leagues twice ten,
As I who write love you to-night,
So should I love you then.

June 6, 1872.

In the Death-Chamber.

Now thou art come into thy blissful rest
Forget me wholly, Dear ! if to remember
Troubles thy sojourn with the spirits blest,
Dulls thy Heaven's June with clouds of Earth's December.

Be happy as God wills ! It were ill love
To cling about an Angel's golden raiment
Grudging her passage to the peace above,
Asking from Paradise some gift for payment.

Be speechless, still, reposeful, proud ! Respond,
By no reviving rose on that white cheek,
To my last cry, despairing, doubting, fond ;
To this impassioned summons which I speak !

Have thou no heed, so that with thee 'tis well !
Kissing thy cold lips on this mournful morrow,
Methinks they say, "I am too glad to tell
One joy !" What matters, then, if I must sorrow !

— Sic sine vita
Vivere quam suave est! sic sine morte mori!

“WHAT Adonaïs is”—great Shelley said—

“Why fear we to become?” And that’s well posed,
For, since *you* can lie there, dear Mayflower! dead,

With eyes which were so bright for ever closed,
And lips which were so lightsome shut for ever,
And hands which were so busy meekly linked,
And laugh, never again to ring—ah, never!

And loving heart so still—why! Death has winked
Over Love’s foolish head at Life, revealing
The riddle of his message. Now we know,
For us and others, that what seemed such stealing
Of our heart’s treasure, was not really so.

God, making her, *must* love her—that’s most certain!
So—she was weary and He drew her curtain.

THE END. 26

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